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ESCAPE FROM L.A.

TELEVISION'S "TARZAN:
THE EPIC ADVENTURES"

VOYAGER'S "CAPTAIN
SULU" TREK PILOT

FILMING "THE STUPIDS"



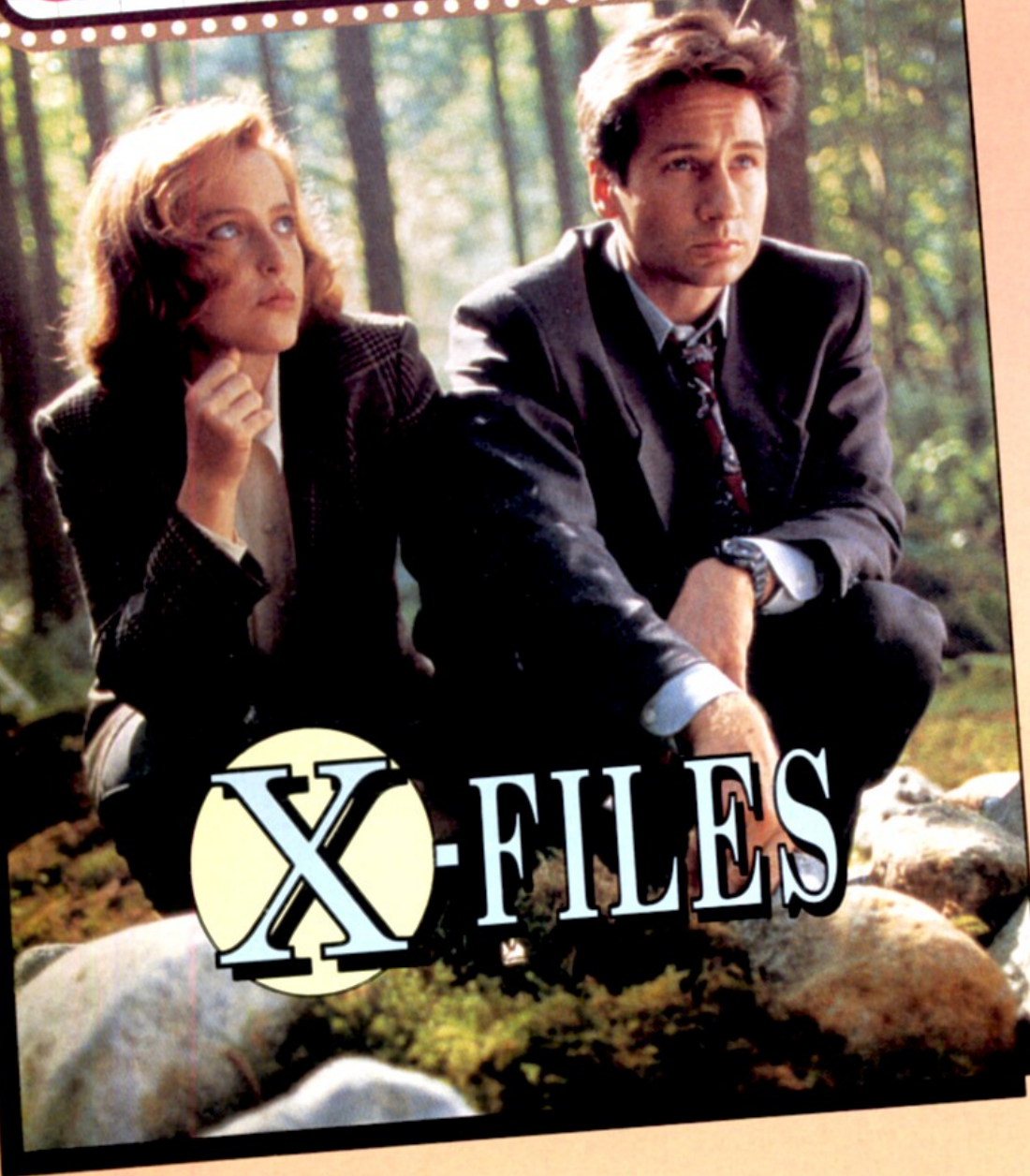
THE BRANDOIZING OF
"ISLAND OF DR. MOREAU"

TALES FROM THE CRYPT
"BORDELLO OF BLOOD"

Volume 28 Number 2



CINEFANTASTIQUE



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"The Magazine with a Sense of Wonder"

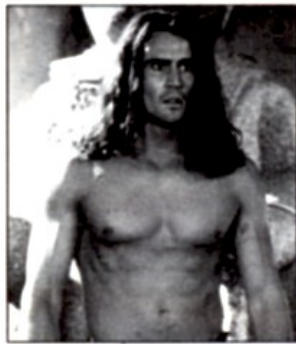
SEPTEMBER 1996

Back in 1980, flush with the success of his early independent efforts like HALLOWEEN and THE FOG, we did a cover story on budding young director John Carpenter. We've made an effort to follow his career in our pages ever since, so it's good to have his work featured on another cover story, with this issue devoted to his ESCAPE FROM L.A. Carpenter, reteamed with HALLOWEEN producer Debra Hill, talks about reviving post-holocaust action hero Snake Plissken from his 1981 low-budgeter ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK. That early effort helped shape the emerging "cyberpunk" genre of S.F. In tapping the vein again, Carpenter employs a larger budget to fashion a summer popcorn extravaganza that's fit for the '90s.

With next month's cover story on television's THE X-FILES, we'll have completed our first year on our new monthly publication schedule. Looking back on the past year, we've hit some real high points with our cover stories on films like TOY STORY, James Bond's return in GOLDENEYE, Terry Gilliam's 12 MONKEYS, Disney's HUNCHBACK OF NOTRE DAME and others. We hope you've enjoyed the increase in frequency, which has allowed us to cover the field of horror, fantasy and science fiction films better than ever.

When *Cinefantastique* began publication in November 1970 it was just a quarterly that barely managed to eke out four issues a year. So it's quite a thrill for me personally—and a dream come true—to publish twelve issues in one year. Our mission was always to cover the field better than anybody. The monthly schedule gives us more ammunition to do just that. I want to thank my West Coast Editor, Steve Biodrowski, whose efforts have made the new frequency a reality, and our editorial and business staff listed on the masthead, who have kept up with the pace and maintained our standards of excellence. Let us know how you like the new CFQ!

Frederick S. Clarke



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Publisher & Editor: Frederick S. Clarke. **West Coast Editor:** Steve Biodrowski. **Bureaus:** New York/ Dan Persons, Dan Scapperotti. **Los Angeles/ Michael Beeler. London/ Alan Jones. Contributors:** Dennis Fischer, Scott Tracy Griffin, Judith Harris, James Van Hise, Anna Kaplan, F. Colin Kingston, Steven Lacroix, Mike Lyons, Harriet Modler, Sean Strebin, John Thonen, David Wilt. **Editorial Operations Manager:** Elaine Fiedler. **Editorial Production:** Lisa Tomczak-Walkington, David Bellm. **Publisher's Assistant:** Lisa Coduto. **Circulation:** Reva Patterson. **Business Manager:** Celeste Casey Clarke.

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EAGERLY AWAITED

CRASH (Fine Line)

David Cronenberg goes farther off the deep end than ever before with this adaptation of the novel by J.G. Ballard (who gave his enthusiastic support to the finished film in a letter published in *Daily Variety*). Although there are no overt science fiction or fantasy elements, the story seems to take place within a strange alternate reality that exists only within the filmmaker's head, wherein auto accidents are fetishized and eroticized by the strange survivor subculture. The film received the jury prize at Cannes, though the decision was contested and several members admitted they had not supported the award. Panelist Francis Ford Coppola defended the decision, stating that it had been based on "audacity, daringness, and originality." On the controversy inspired by his film, Cronenberg commented via the film's press notes, "It's a dangerous film in many ways. It does violence to people's understanding of human relationships; it does violence to people's understanding of eroticism. If people find it disturbing, I think that's where the disturbing element is. But I think that's a primary function of art: to do violence to the little cocoon that we sometimes find ourselves enveloped in." CRASH was rated NC-17—a rating that was not challenged by the distributor, whose president stated that the film was made "by adults for adults," adding, "Fine Line is wholly in agreement with the MPAA and will not challenge the rating for exploitative purposes."

January/February 1997



RELEASE SCHEDULE

Upcoming cinefantastique at a glance, along with a word or two for the discriminating viewer.

compiled by Jay Stevenson
(unless otherwise noted)

TALES FROM THE CRYPT: BORDELLO OF BLOOD (Universal) August 16

Dennis Miller, Erika Eleniak, Angie Everhart, Corey Feldman and Chris Sarandon star for producer-director Gilbert Adler. Executive producers are Richard Donner, David Giler, Walter Hill, Joel Silver and Robert Zemeckis. The script is by Adler and A. L. Katz, from a story by Robert Zemeckis and Bob Gale. SEE PAGE 32

THE CROW: CITY OF ANGELS (Dimension) August 30

To avoid the summer crunch, Dimension pushed the release of this film back three weeks from its originally scheduled August 2 debut. SEE CFQ 28:1

ESCAPE FROM L.A. (Paramount) August 9

The long-awaited follow-up to John Carpenter's modestly budgeted 1979 cult science fiction hit finally arrives—as a big-budget studio production. SEE PAGE 16

THE ISLAND OF DR. MOREAU (New Line) August 23

The third filmization of H.G. Wells' novel reaches screens at the end of this month. Marlon Brando and Val Kilmer star for director John Frankenheimer. SEE PAGE 28

JACK (Hollywood) August 2

What would it be like for a 10-year-old to have the body of a 40-year-old man? That is the question raised by this Francis Ford Coppola film, starring Robin Williams, Diane Lane, Brian Kerwin, Bill Cosby, and Fran Drescher. The project originated as a script by newcomers James DeMonaco and Gary Nadeau, about a very special, albeit short-lived child who has been sheltered from the outside world and wants to experience the kind of childhood we take for granted. "We started with a character who aged fast, and the theme was that life is short," said DeMonaco. "He had to try to experience everything in a short amount of time." Added Nadeau, "He's caught between two worlds, if you like, between adulthood and childhood. That presented a lot of different scenarios we could explore, and we took it from there." Though not without comedy, especially with Williams in the title role, the film is mostly a drama: Jack suffers from a strange condition that causes his body to age four times more rapidly than normal, and

there is nothing he or his parents can do about it except come to terms with its inevitability. "What's great about JACK," said Nadeau, "is that it is about something serious: life. We all have a limited amount of time on this earth, and this has a *carpe diem* feel to it. It's a fable, but it explores some real issues." **Dennis Fischer**

LOCH NESS (Gramercy) August 23

This attempt at an uplifting fantasy, from the producers of *FOUR WEDDINGS AND A FUNERAL*, was pushed back from a Spring release, despite favorable advance reviews. Ted Danson stars. SEE PAGE 44

MATILDA (Tri-Star) August 9

The Queen of England called Roald Dahl's novel "quite, quite delicious." It's about a psychic girl who learns to use her powers against the awful principal of the boarding school to which she has been confined by her uncaring parents. Danny DeVito, Rhea Perlman, Embeth Davidtz, and Mara Wilson star. Nicholas Kazan and Robin Swicord adapted the script for DeVito, who also directed and co-produced.

SOLO (Triumph) August 23

Mario Van Peebles (*HIGHLANDER III*) and William Sadler (*DEMON KNIGHT*) star in this low-budget high-action science fiction film. SEE PAGE 38

THE STUPIDS (New Line) August 30

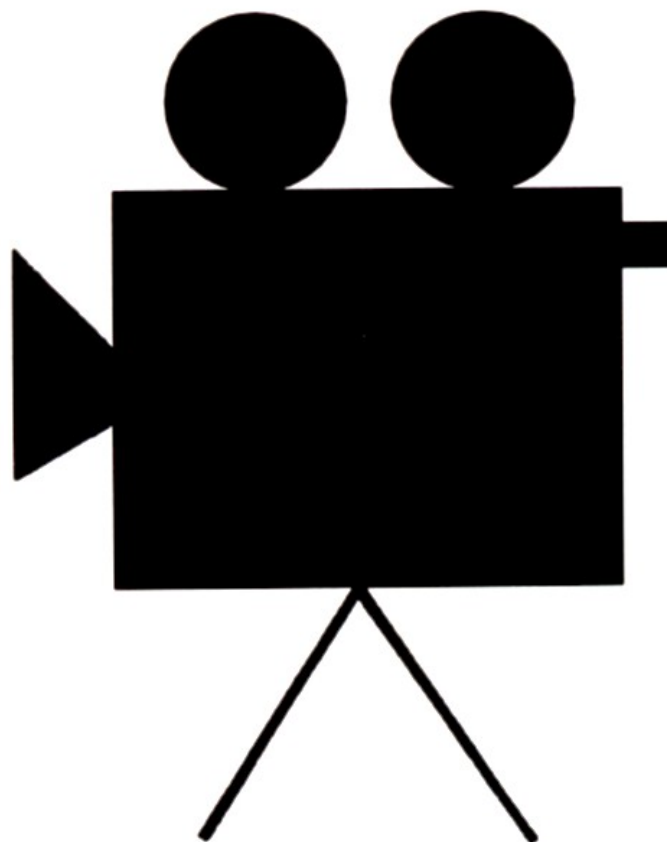
There's never been a family quite like the Stupids: they're bold; they're daring; and they live up to their name in a big way. Based on a series of children's books, this film was pushed back from a December release when the original distributor, Savoy, went down the tubes. Tom Arnold stars; Christopher Lee also makes an appearance. John Landis directed. SEE PAGE 14

NEW KING OF KAIJU EIGA

GAMERA, GUARDIAN OF THE UNIVERSE (A.D. Visions)

After a one-day sneak preview—of a subtitled print—in Los Angeles last July, the dubbed version of this film is slated for national release this fall. Although it may be hard to believe for those who recall the *GAMERA* films of the '60s and '70s, this is a fantastic film, one of the finest Japanese giant monster movies since the original *GODZILLA, KING OF THE MONSTERS* started it all back in 1956. Although the script breaks no new ground, the special effects are primitive, and the film contains clichés common to the genre (fleeing crowds, crumbling model buildings, expository newscasters), it is nevertheless solid entertainment. Rather than monster rampages, the story unfolds in a series of suspenseful chases: the coast guard chases a mysterious floating atoll that turns out to be Gamera; scientists chase Gyaos, the predatory bird that turns out to be Gamera's adversary; the army chases Gamera before realizing that he was genetically engineered by an ancient civilization to protect the Earth from Gyaos; and finally, Gamera chases Gyaos. Also, the special effects are used to complement the story, not just dazzle the eyes. Still, there is plenty for those who want dazzle. Memorable effects scenes include: a young Gyaos swooping down at a woman after snatching her dog; another Gyaos lunging at his human captors after the birds are lured into the Fukuoka baseball dome; a nocturnal scene where the sky around Mt. Fuji is lit with flares as Gamera is bombarded; Gamera's blasting his enemy's eggs from the Tokyo Tower, sending their disgusting yolks plummeting into the street; and the monsters' aerial battle over Tokyo. The movie also benefits from a great score by Ko Ohtani, reminiscent of Jerry Goldsmith. SEE CFQ 27:6 **Steve Ryfle**

September/October



HOLLYWOOD GOTHIC

MEN IN BLACK

*Tommy Lee Jones and Will Smith
on the trail of illegal aliens.*

by Dennis Fischer

MEN IN BLACK, the new feature being executive produced by Steven Spielberg, is a science fiction action-comedy based on the late '80s Malibu comic book series *The Men in Black*, created by Lowell Cunningham. Barry Sonnenfeld (THE ADDAMS FAMILY) is directing, from a script adapted by Ed Solomon (co-writer of the BILL & TED movies). Production designer Bo Welch has created a retro-'60s future look, based in part on the '63 World's Fair in Flushing Meadows, New York—which, according to the film, was created as a cover-up for one of the first true alien sightings. Rick Baker is handling the alien makeup effects, with visual effects supplied by ILM. Release is scheduled for the summer of '97.

Set in modern-day New York, the film stars Tommy Lee Jones and Will Smith. Smith plays an NYPD officer who joins forces with Jones, an agent of the Men in Black, an organization established in the early '60s after the first alien sighting on Earth. Initially established to cover up the fact that aliens had landed, the agency later began monitoring the aliens, who are allowed to stay as long as they remain peaceful. If they break the law, the Men in Black deport them from Earth. Their current mission is to track down an intergalactic terrorist who arrives to claim a galaxy (!) that will help his people survive; unfortunately, achieving his aims will mean the destruction of Earth. The cast also includes Rip Torn as Zed, the head of MIB, and Linda Fiorentino as Dr. Laurel Weaver, the deputy medical examiner for the city of New York.

"It's mainly a comedy, but the comedy plays out because of the reality of the situation," said Sonnenfeld from the set. "You have people talking to aliens and yet never acknowledging that they're an alien. It's not like a broad comedy; it's a sophisticated alien-adven-



Tommy Lee Jones (left) and Will Smith (above) star as agents tracking down an intergalactic terrorist plotting the destruction of the Earth.

ture action-comedy.

"The comic book is very dark and very good, and totally different," continued Sonnenfeld, who first read the script over three years ago. "Although it was very funny, we changed it a lot. It was a very different script. It took place in Nevada, Philly, Washington—all over the country—and it was broader in nature. I felt that, if aliens exist, they would live in New York, because they could blend in without actually having to hide the fact that they are aliens. In fact, I feel sure I've been driven by a few alien cab drivers. So I had it rewritten for New York and made it less broad."

Sonnenfeld's desire to avoid

broad comedy extended not only to the script, but to his actors. "When I sense that Tommy thinks he's being funny, I say, 'Let's do one flatter, even straighter.'" [For example,] Tommy is interrogating this alien, who is giving all these excuses in this alien tongue, and Tommy just says, 'That's enough. Put up your hands and all your flippers right now,' but without going, 'Put up your hands [punch-line emphasis]—and all your flippers!' The more you play it straight, the funnier it is."

Regarding why he tackled this particular project, Sonnenfeld explained, "I just have a feeling we don't really have a clue about

continued on next page

JONNY'S NEW QUEST

by F. Colin Kingston

In their quest for a ratings bonanza, Turner Broadcasting is revving up a new version of one of the most beloved animated series in TV history: JONNY QUEST. The new series will premiere this fall, simultaneously running on all three of the Turner-owned networks.

According to Joseph Barbera, co-founder of Hanna-Barbera Productions, the revival of the classic animated series came about because "almost everywhere I went on business or personal appearances, people kept yelling, 'When are you going to make more JONNY QUEST?'" Turner Broadcasting, which bought Hanna-Barbera several years ago, obviously listened.

Although this updated version remains true to the original series, there are changes: Jonny, originally 11 years old, is now 14, and his trademark black turtleneck sweater has been replaced by a black t-shirt. Hadji is now 17 and is Dr. Quest's assistant. The boys also have a female companion, Jessi, the 15-year-old daughter of Jonny's friend and protector Roger "Race" Bannon. (Though not part of the original series, Jessie was featured on several theatrical-length episodes produced in recent years for USA Network.) Bandit, Jonny's beloved dog, is also back, as is Dr. Benton Quest. Fans of the original will be happy to know that Dr. Zinn, the only recurring villain featured in the classic series, also appears in several episodes.

Explaining the changes, Sherry Gunther, senior vice president of programming for Turner Home Entertainment, said, "We wanted to focus the stories on the kids themselves, rather than the adults being the focus and the kids going along for the ride. Being older, the characters are ready to tackle problems a little bit better."

George Segal and Robert Patrick are among the voice regulars, with Mark Hamill, Roddy McDowall, and Mark Singer doing guest stints. 27-year-old J.D. Roth (FIRST BORN), who voices Jonny, waxes enthusiastic about the show's potential, "I only hope this job, that's been 13 months, turns into 13 years, because it's a total blast. I hope everyone watches." □

Short Notes

Death squids, killer calamari, and omnivorous octopi may be Hollywood's next craze, in the wake of NBC's ratings winner THE BEAST. ☞ First, director Barry Levinson has settled on a Stephen Hauser script, adapted from Michael Crichton's novel *Sphere*, about a team of scientists investigating an alien ship that crashed in the ocean millennia ago; after unleashing a mysterious force from the ship, the scientists encounter a deadly giant squid that may be controlled by an alien intelligence. ☞ Meanwhile, Hollywood pictures has shelled out \$1 million for Stephen Sommers' spec script TENTACLES (since retitled DEEP RISING). Sommers will direct Treat Williams in this tale of gunrunners who encounter a deserted cruise ship inhabited by a killer creature. ☞ Other news: Alice Krige (GHOST STORY) has signed on to play the Borg Queen in the newly titled STAR TREK: FIRST ENCOUNTER. (First encounter? Isn't this about the fifth encounter with the Borg?) □

STARSHIP TROOPER

Dina Meyer battles bugs in filmization of Robert Heinlein's classic novel.

by Michael Beeler

STARSHIP TROOPERS is Disney's second attempt to bring the long-ignored work of 1950's science fiction writer Robert Heinlein to the big screen. After the box office disappointment of THE PUPPET MASTERS, the project had been lost in pre-production limbo due to budgetary concerns, until a co-financing deal between Disney and Tri-Star settled on an \$80 million price tag—an amount that could grow to \$100 million during production. The five-and-a-half month shoot is scheduled to wrap in October, for a July '97 release.

"It's a science fiction, epic, futuristic war movie, where Earth battles another planet inhabited with bugs," said actress Dina Meyer, who plays one of Earth's defenders. "It should be a pretty good role for me. This time I'm carrying 30 pounds of armor on my chest and a 22 pound rifle, killing bugs."

Meyer took the role largely because she wanted to work with famed director Paul Verhoeven (ROBOCOP), who is well known for his violent, crowd-pleasing films. "I took [this] because I thought he was amazing [with] TOTAL RE-



Dina Meyer, previously seen in DRAGONHEART and JOHNNY MNEMONIC (above), next appears in Paul Verhoeven's film of STARSHIP TROOPERS.

CALL," she said. "This is more like TOTAL RECALL, as opposed to the highly sexual BASIC INSTINCT. It's more of a science fiction movie, and I think that's what he does best. It's a good script, by Edward Neumeier, that's action-packed."

Coming off a stint on DRAGONHEART, Meyer has experience maintaining eye contact with a creature that won't be seen until post-production. "We're using the same sticks with tennis balls," she said of the on-set aid that tells ac-

tors where to look at the monster.

The pumped-up budget will allow for elaborate ILM effects; however, according to Meyer, the big bucks are not being paid to the human actors. "[The budget's] up to 90 [million] now, and it's the second week of shooting," she said. "But the bugs are getting all the money. They are the stars of this movie. The actors are, you know, the peons. The bugs are getting the huge salaries. I certainly didn't see a big jump in my salary." □

Production Starts

ANACONDA

Jon Voight heads a cast that includes Ice Cube and Kari Wuher, in an adventure being shot in Brazil for Columbia Pictures. Called "JAWS on land" by those who've read Hans Bauer's script, the plot revolves around a group of teachers on a trip down the Amazon River who are pursued by a killer snake. (Considering Voight's casting, maybe "JAWS meets DELIVERANCE" is more appropriate.) Helmer Luis Llosa's previous directing credits include THE SPECIALIST and SNIPER, but he also produced some low-budget science fiction for Roger Corman, including the almost unwatchable jungle monster movie, WATCHERS III.

BEAVIS AND BUTT-HEAD

Mike Judge's animated MTV duo comes to the big screen. But can the obnoxious characters really sustain a feature? Sure, watching them trash pretentious videos may be funny for 30 minutes on TV, but sitting through 90 minutes of that in a theatre might be hard on the audience. ("Heh, heh! You said 'hard on.' Cool!")

Illegal Aliens

continued from previous page/ what's going on. I don't know whether there are aliens or there aren't aliens, but I do believe that everything that any expert has ever told us in our life has been proven wrong: 500 years ago, everyone on the planet believed that the Earth was flat, and, according to Copernicus, the Earth was the center of the universe; when I was growing up, there were no black holes. To think that we actually have a clue about what's actually out there is amusing to me, so that's why I did this."

Although the project is much larger than Sonnenfeld's previous directorial efforts, he said, "This has been the most relaxed shoot I've been on. Rick Baker is incredibly professional. So is ILM. Will Smith and Tommy have been great to work with, so it's actually been the easiest shoot. There is a great deal of pressure, because there's a lot of money and a lot of effects, and you've got to really think about what you want in the cutting room nine months from now. That's sort of annoying, but it's been fun actually."

Sonnenfeld described a very harmonious relationship working with exec producer Steven Spielberg, who lived not far from him on the East Coast for a time and who helped him persuade Smith to do the film. "[Spielberg's] been great! He's been unbelievably smart and funny and supportive. Sometimes he makes suggestions and we do them, and sometimes he makes suggestions and I say, 'You know, I don't see it that way,' and he says, 'Fine.' He's been really supportive and really fun." □

Obituaries

by Jay Stevenson

Whitner Bissell

A familiar face in hundreds of movies (THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE, AIRPORT, THE CAINE MUTINY), character actor "Whit" Bissell (as he was listed in his movies' credits) received the Life Career Award from the Academy of Science Fiction, Fantasy, and Horror Films in 1994 for his numerous genre appearances, including THE CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON (1954), INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS (1956), and SOYLENT GREEN (1973). He is perhaps best known to horror fans for his role in 1957's I WAS A TEENAGE WEREWOLF, in which he played the evil scientist whose experiments turn Michael Landon into the title character. A year later, he virtually recreated the role in I WAS A TEENAGE FRANKENSTEIN—although there was no real continuity, and of course this new mad scientist was supposed to be a modern-day descendant of the infamous baron. Bissell was 86 years old when he died March 5, of undisclosed causes.

Sterling Silliphant

The Oscar-winning writer (IN THE HEAT OF THE NIGHT, 1967) died earlier this year. He gained initial fame for his TV scripts during television's "Golden Age," before going on to write several blockbuster theatrical hits. He won a Golden Globe for the science fiction-themed CHARLY (1968), adapted from Daniel Keyes' *Flowers for Algernon*—which also earned an Oscar for Cliff Robertson. He later scripted such '70s Irwin Allen disaster films as THE POSEIDON ADVENTURE, THE TOWERING INFERNO, and the more science fiction-oriented THE SWARM (1978). He also wrote the script for the philosophical martial arts fantasy CIRCLE OF IRON (1979), from a story Bruce Lee had conceived (with the help of James Coburn) shortly before his death. Silliphant was 78.

Lyle Talbot

The veteran actor died March 5, at the age of 94. He appeared in hundreds of movies but is known to genre fans for his role in PLAN 9 FROM OUTER SPACE. His last screen appearance was filmed shortly before his death: in the documentary THE HAUNTED WORLD OF ED WOOD, he offered some lively and amusing commentary about the schlock director. □

THINNER

Preview audiences want more gore: studio complies.

By Steven LaCroix

If at first you don't succeed, try, try again. Those words couldn't be more true for the ending of director Tom Holland's latest Stephen King project, *THINNER*, shot in Maine last year. Despite Holland's decision to keep the book's intent, the movie's ending failed before a test screening audience, merely weeks before *THINNER*'s planned debut May 3.

Even Stephen King was rumored to be a little baffled by the audience's reaction, since the movie ended exactly as the book did. No one wanted to see *THINNER* go down as a failure, especially Holland, who had to wait six years before receiving a go ahead to film the movie. Holland realized, what one reads is a lot different from what one sees and shooting a new ending was inevitable. Paramount now plans to open the film in September.

Why wasn't the first ending so hot? The answer may lie with the lack of promised special effects due to Holland's opinion that *THINNER* should be more of a dramatic piece than a horrifying one. Special effects, magic man, and Academy Award winner, Greg Cannom, created extraordinary work, yet some of it was never used. Props such as puppets and actor Robert John Burke's final stage makeup were abandoned, fearing that it was too much for the audience to swallow. As for the ending, the screening audience apparently was disappointed with Holland's effects-less approach.



Added to Stephen King's ending is Vincent Guastini's grisly makeup of Billy Halleck's dead daughter.

"I think they wanted more of a downer-type ending," explained a source close to the production about why the audience wasn't happy with the ending of *THINNER*. "The old ending was that Billy [Robert John Burke] eats the gypsy pie and then dies. But the thing is, you didn't see him die, he just eats the pie. Plus, no one sees his wife or daughter die either."

At the end of April Holland assembled Burke and his production team and shot a new ending on location in Maine where the film was shot originally. The new scenes involved gruesome effects depicting the deaths of Billy's wife and daughter. Noted one of the filmmakers, "The audience wanted to see what happened to them, after they'd eaten the pie, as well as Billy, so we went for a *GHOST STORY* type of ending. We had only six days to do it."

Producer Mitchell Galin called on New

Vincent Guastini's prop corpse of Halleck's wife was constructed and shot in six days: one of the changes delaying the film's release from May to October.



Robert John Burke stars as Billy Halleck, wasting away in makeup designed by Academy Award winner Greg Cannom, in Paramount's *THINNER*.

Jersey makeup artists Vincent Guastini and Joe Machia, who had worked under Cannom, to fashion the new effects. Galin declined to be interviewed about the reshooting and referred calls to Paramount.

Galini prepared storyboards for the sequence showing skeletons of the wife and daughter. Working with Tom Holland, Guastini devised a more horrific approach, showing the rotted corpses.

"The mother was definitely used for a shock effect," said a source on the film. "In the movie, Billy wants her to eat the gypsy pie, believing she's been having an affair with his doctor. But it turns out to be all in his head. He asks her, 'Did you eat the pie? You did, didn't you?' Billy grabs her shoulder and she turns around. She's this disgusting wet, wasted away, bony, skinny woman. 'The daughter was more like the mother in *PSYCHO*, all rotted and dried out. They're going to superimpose the makeup over the actual footage of the actress."

THINNER is not the only King movie produced by Mitchell Galin to have its ending changed. *PET SEMATARY*, also filmed by Galin in Maine, had toyed with a few different endings before settling with the right one. □



Small-screen Tarzan is big on action and fidelity to original.

By Scott Tracy Griffin

In 1912, novelist Edgar Rice Burroughs asked himself, could a human being raised outside the corrupting influence of civilization be a moral, physical, and mental superman?

From this musing sprang Tarzan, one of the most enduring heroes found in literature.

Eighty-four years after Burroughs posed his question, Tarzan reappears in an unprecedented fashion with the television debut of *TARZAN, THE EPIC ADVENTURES*. This syndicated fantasy series, the brainchild of Keller Siegel Entertainment in association with STI Entertainment Group, draws inspiration from a logical—though surprisingly unused source: creator Burroughs' original novels.

"Our goal is to stay within Burroughs' story structure, interpreting it so that we are true to what he would have done if he were sitting in our place," stated supervising producer

Dennis Steinmetz from the production offices of STI Entertainment at Disney/MGM Studios in Lake Buena Vista, Florida.

EPIC ADVENTURES' pilot will launch the series with a two-hour television film that establishes Tarzan's civilized persona, Monsieur Jean C. Tarzan of Paris. Set in 1912, after the events of *TARZAN OF THE APES*, Tarzan (Joe Lara) has

lost Jane's love—for now—and renounced his title as Lord Greystoke. Though intelligent, articulate, and capable, Tarzan isn't comfortable in society.

Events transpire to return Tarzan to the African jungle in pursuit of the treacherous Nikolas Rokoff (Andrew Divoff), whose greedy quest for treasure will imperil the entire world. The chase leads Tarzan, Rokoff,

and their parties to Pellucidar, the prehistoric land at the earth's core, where evolution has taken a nasty turn. Tarzan must team with Jana of Zorham (Linda Hoffman), and her tribe, to prevent the Mahars (vicious, carnivorous flying reptiles that dominate the Cro-Magnons) from unleashing their evil on the outer world.

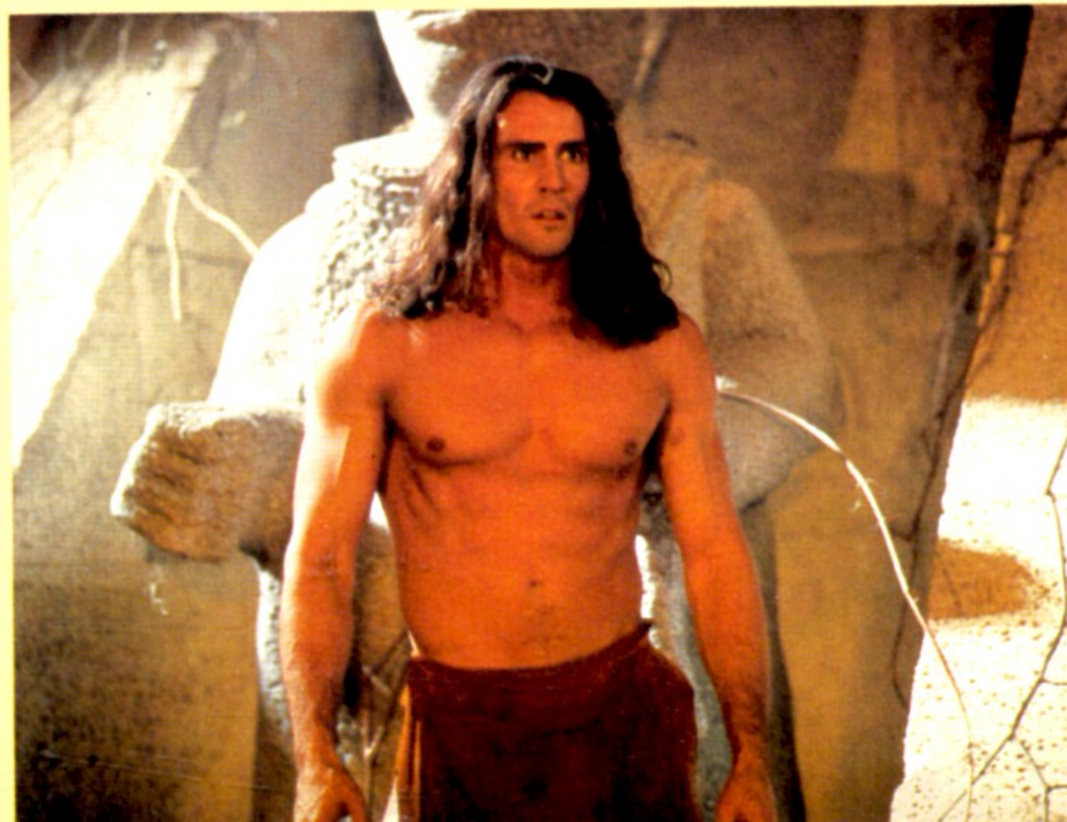
Joining Tarzan in the pilot are Paul D'Arnot (Dennis Christopher), the French adventurer responsible for Tarzan's introduction to civilization, and Mugambi (Ralph Wilcox), the Oxford-educated prince of the Waziri tribe, both of whom are characters that originate in Burroughs' novels.

The pilot loosely incorporates elements from *APES'* sequel, *THE RETURN OF TARZAN*; Steinmetz and company plan to use additional Burroughs characters, settings, and storylines in future episodes. Tarzan will visit lost cities like Opar and Atlantis, and encounter lost tribes such as the Leopard Men and Ant Men,



The Mahars strive to unleash their evil—only Tarzan stands in their way.

Tarzan finds a portal to alien worlds in the Temple of the Ancients. True to the original, this Tarzan is a wanderer who discovers lost worlds and races.





Tarzan (Joe Lara) clashes brutally with the Mahars' Queen Mora (Cory Everson).

concepts drawn directly from the original stories.

"What we tried to do was surround ourselves with people that are into the Burroughs concept, people that really can appreciate what Burroughs wanted to do, or what we thought that he would want to do in our situation," Steinmetz commented. A science fiction fan who counts the early masters H.G. Wells and Jules Verne among his influences, Steinmetz has seen to it that any staff not already familiar with Burroughs' oeuvre immerse themselves immediately in the author's work.

Steinmetz boasts an impressive 31-year track record of television success; in 1975, he teamed with Sid and Marty Krofft to create *THE LAND OF THE LOST*, a children's television show that would become a cult favorite. He has since directed numerous soap operas and sitcoms, winning an Emmy for his direction of *THE YOUNG AND THE RESTLESS*.

While meeting with Paul

Siegel to pitch another project, Steinmetz was offered the opportunity to help bring Tarzan back into mainstream pop-culture. Seeing the potential to explore fertile new ground, he quickly agreed. "Ever since childhood, science fiction has been one of my loves," he said. "Once I saw the possibilities in using Burroughs' works and enhancing them, and going for a little more fantasy, it intrigued me, and I came onboard."

The idea of playing an intelligent, articulate Tarzan appealed to action star Joe Lara, who donned a loincloth in the 1989 CBS pilot *TARZAN IN MANHATTAN*. Though the resulting syndicated series returned to the jungle setting, Lara rejected the offer to play Tarzan in the usual monosyllabic mold; the series folded after a year.

Lara, who was unavailable for comment, met with Steinmetz, who said, "I liked Joe right from the beginning. I thought he had a power, a mystique about him—his persona

BUILDING THE TARZAN TEAM

"What we tried to do was surround ourselves with people that are into the Burroughs concept, people that can really appreciate what Burroughs wanted to do..."

was not one of what most people would consider a conventional Tarzan, with Johnny Weissmuller as the image."

The role was not to be won easily, however. Steinmetz and a casting director auditioned over five hundred men in New York, Los Angeles, the Midwest, and Florida, before awarding the plum role to Lara.

"Joe was the best," said Steinmetz. "What he brought to the role in terms of his power and the interesting quality of the way he played it, was just unequaled with the people that we auditioned. He won it hands-down, without a question—despite the stiff competition out there."

Brian Yuzna was tapped to direct the pilot, and may return to direct future episodes. Yuzna, who has won acclaim for his work producing horror films (the *REANIMATOR* series, *SILENT NIGHT, DEADLY NIGHT 4* and *5*, and *RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD 3*), was eager to direct a fantasy film, especially one with such a popular protagonist.

"Tarzan is the most recognizable superhero in the world," said Yuzna. "He was the first

one; before Tarzan, there were no superheros. I think he's the quintessential superhero because he has the savagery of nature."

Yuzna was familiar with Burroughs' work, and counts *THE SEVENTH VOYAGE OF SINBAD* as one of his favorite films. There is a dearth of films in the fantasy genre, he asserted, and he was pleased to have the opportunity to bring Burroughs' immortal character to life.

Dismissed as too unsophisticated for today's audience, the fantasy genre languished until *HERCULES: THE LEGENDARY JOURNEYS* became a runaway hit in syndication. Though *EPIC ADVENTURES* has its own rich literary history on which to draw for inspiration, Steinmetz is grateful for *HERCULES'* success: "I have high praise for their bringing the genre to the marketplace and allowing us to resurrect Burroughs' wonderful hero."

In their quest to recapture Tarzan's essence, the series will jettison the character of Jane for now. Burroughs also found Jane problematic, and tried to rid Tarzan of her by killing her in the first chapter of the seventh

Tempted to serve Rokoff (Andrew Divoff) as the main course in a reptile repast, Queen Mora decides instead to team-up with him and conquer the outer world.



TARZAN

THE EPIC
ADVENTURES

MAKE-UP EFFECTS

Kevin Brennan adds fantasy creatures to Tarzan's usual apes.

By Scott Tracy Griffin

"I guess we were the only ones crazy enough to actually take on the assignment," chuckled effects wiz Kevin Brennan when asked how he won the job of creating special effects for the two-hour television pilot of *TARZAN: THE EPIC ADVENTURES*, a venture that demanded big-screen style effects on a small-screen budget and schedule.

Brennan and his crew of 12 are responsible for bringing to life many of the fantastic creatures that originate within the pages of Edgar Rice Burroughs' novels. *EPIC ADVENTURES'* pilot intertwines the Tarzan and Pellucidar fantasy series and is Tarzan's first on-screen foray to Pellucidar, the land at the earth's core.

"I'd always wanted to do a Tarzan thing—I really like apes," commented Brennan, who counts H.G. Wells' novels, Ray Harryhausen's animation, and the films *2001* and *PLANET OF THE APES* among his early influences. "We do a lot of gorilla suits, mechanical apes, and things like that.

"I was always a fan of people like Charlie Gemora and Rick Baker, who performed in gorilla suits, so I built my own. We actually used my gorilla suit—the one that's in *TWELVE MONKEYS* is in Tarzan, too. I'm in a cage in the Paris zoo, talking to Tarzan. I think I'm getting too old for it though; the thrill has worn off of being inside one of those things."

A tour of Brennan's busy shop in a North Hollywood warehouse reveals a variety of creations designed for the film. When Brennan and associate John Fesh learned that the ape-man was returning to television, they expected a show in the traditional jungle milieu, and submitted a portfolio including ape designs and gorilla suits.

Brennan's crew won the assignment on the strength of

their past work, but they soon found that this would be no ordinary Tarzan series. *EPIC ADVENTURES* incorporates the fantasy elements prevalent in Burroughs' fiction that are rarely translated to the screen, including a giant snake, the Rhamphynchus-like Mahars, and their missing-link minions, the brutal Sagoths.

For the giant snake guarding the subterranean portal to Pellucidar, Brennan and his staff built a miniature puppet and a huge head large enough to engulf Tarzan (Joe Lara). The Mahars were a combination of rod puppets and a full-sized replica brought to life by Walter Phelan. Phelan, a long-time Burroughs enthusiast, wore a combination suit-puppet for waist-up shots of the Mahar, which is supposed to stand 10 feet tall, and have a 10-foot wingspan.

Brennan's passion for creating creatures was ignited as a youngster in Connecticut. "I used to read *Famous Monsters* magazine and was really nutty about horror films," he recalled. "Through the magazine, I started corresponding with different makeup effects guys."

Brennan's career was soon launched. "I worked a little bit for Dick Smith; he used to sell these vacuform masks that you could assemble yourself, and I put together a bunch for him. It was really mindless labor

For the guard snake, Brennan built a miniature puppet and this head section. Fantasy elements, such as giant snakes, often get left out of Tarzan films.



Brennan's gorilla suit was used in both *TARZAN* and *TWELVE MONKEYS*; his studio has gained somewhat of a reputation for primates.

but I got to hang around at his house and watch him run foam rubber and things like that, so I was pretty excited."

In 1980, Brennan moved to California and worked for Rob Bottin on *THE HOWLING*. Numerous projects later, Brennan teamed with Elaine Alexander to form their own company in 1987. Their proficiency with apes has led to a spate of recent assignments, including supplying puppet doubles for the orangutans in *THE JUNGLE BOOK* and *DUNSTON CHECKS IN*. Among Brennan's other credits are *NINE MONTHS*, *RETURN OF THE LIVING DEAD 3*, *HOWLING V* and *VI*, and *TURNER AND HOOC*.

In his youth, Brennan read Burroughs' *Pellucidar* series and *The Land That Time Forgot*, but not the *Tarzan* novels. However, he enjoyed the Weissmuller films, and was a fan of the character based on the early celluloid interpretations. Ironically, his opportunity to work on a Tarzan project combined the character with the prehistoric inner-world with which Brennan was familiar.

When asked which projects are the most rewarding, he replies, "It's more the little things that give you a sense of accomplishment—that you're able to pull them off in the first place, like Tarzan. We only had about three and a half weeks and not much money to make all our stuff and then ship it three thousand miles. That gave us a pretty good feeling that we were able to do it." □

serialized story, *Tarzan the Untamed*. After a multitude of fans, including his wife and children, strenuously objected, he reluctantly revived Jane in the final chapter, but ignored her for most of the later Tarzan tales.

Jane may eventually appear as Tarzan's true love in EPIC ADVENTURES, but they will remain separated to maintain the romantic tension. Burroughs' Tarzan won the girl in his second outing, eliminating that element of suspense early in the twenty-four novel series.

Another cliché in earlier interpretations that this incarnation will avoid is the "cute animal" sidekick. Tarzan is a friend of most animals, but he will not have a pet like Cheetah the chimp to help with chores or provide comic relief. Steinmetz and company feel that Tarzan's adventurous lifestyle will not leave much time for interaction with animals, though they will be present.

EPIC ADVENTURES will also forge new ground by filming on location in Africa. While the two previous Tarzan television series and numerous movies have filmed in South and Central America and across Asia, few of the 46 Tarzan films shot any footage in Africa.

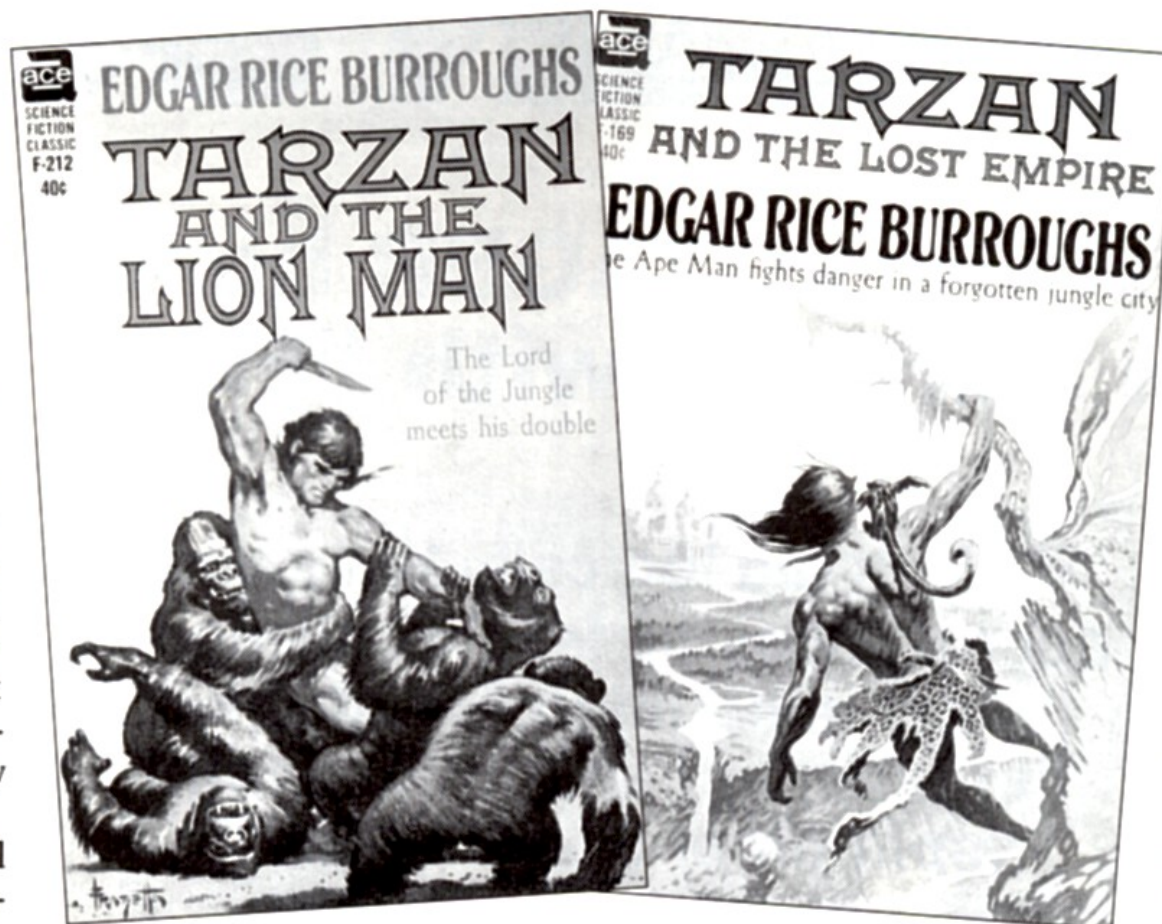
The series will have many settings. Burroughs' Tarzan was a nomadic wanderer who uncovered numerous hidden civilizations and lost races in his journeys through the pulp magazines, providing EPIC ADVENTURES with engaging precedent. Keller Siegel plans to have Tarzan visit the Land That Time Forgot, and has optioned the rights to Burroughs' Venus series, too.

Numerous elements were lifted from the Tarzan novels in previous films; nonetheless, all have fallen short. The most egregious transgression was the movies' penchant for recasting the apeman as a stereotyped caricature of dumb, grunting, masculinity.

Burroughs, who died in 1950, deplored the defamation of his literary progeny, but resigned himself to collecting the fat paychecks that the movies generated. Though Tarzan has occasionally been interpreted as

HERO FOR ALL GENERATIONS

"As for Tarzan's relevance to the '90s, or any other time slot," said McWhorter, "he remains the epitome of virtue, strength and intellect—a perfect pop-media hero..."



Most of Burroughs' classic novels are out of print but are poised for rediscovery, spurred on by EPIC ADVENTURES, cover art by Frank Frazetta.

literate, he has always been recast in another's mold.

The last, and perhaps only, serious attempt to plumb Burroughs' literary depths came in 1984 when Oscar-winning screenwriter Robert Towne sought to bring Burroughs' Tarzan to the screen in a faithful adaptation of the original novel. GREYSTOKE, THE LEGEND OF TARZAN was the first cinematic exploration of Tarzan's childhood among the apes, but few fans recognized the confused, angst-ridden character mercilessly buffeted by British society in the movie's second half.

Burroughs' hero was superlative in every sense of the word, based on the idealistic theory that, without civilization and like Rousseau's natural man, we would not be tainted by deceit, corruption, dishonesty, or the legion of evils that plague mankind.

George McWhorter, curator of the Edgar Rice Burroughs Memorial Collection at the University of Louisville, Kentucky, attributes Tarzan's enduring

popularity to his heroic stature. Observed McWhorter, "Although adventure and morality can still be had in America today, they rarely come in tandem anymore. But Tarzan is always there waiting to be discovered by a new generation or rediscovered by the old. He is a composite of the best qualities inherent in the human race, which is the secret of his longevity."

McWhorter, who publishes the quarterly *Burroughs Bulletin*, has been instrumental in reviving the Burroughs Bibliophile fan club and is a world-renowned authority on ERB and his creations. From his front-row seat, he has witnessed the recent resurgence of popularity for Burroughs and his work.

"As for Tarzan's relevance to the 1990s, or any other time slot," said McWhorter, "he remains the epitome of virtue, strength and intellect—a perfect pop-media hero who is being exploited to the fullest in this decade by Disney and other film studios."

Burroughs' grandson, Danton, an active partner in Edgar Rice Burroughs, Incorporated,

agreed, "He's a timeless, ageless character that all generations find appealing, due to his mythical dimension—he was based on characters like Romulus and Remus. This is why he lasts—the mythical quality is timeless."

According to Danton Burroughs, another characteristic contributing to Tarzan's lasting popularity is the ape-man's value system. "My grandfather instilled his characters with the same morals he taught his children and grandchildren—being honest, chivalrous, and always doing the right thing."

Although Burroughs' writing style will never be duplicated, and only tepidly imitated, Danton and the management of ERB Inc. are determined that his legacy will live on. "We've tried to constantly keep the characters and the image before the public," Burroughs confirmed. "Live action and animated feature films are also in the works."

Keller Siegel plans to tie the series in with as many merchandisers as possible. TARZAN: THE EPIC ADVENTURES action figures by Trendmasters are already in toy stores, and more products will follow.

Yuzna feels that Tarzan has all the characteristics of a contemporary superhero that will appeal to a modern audience. "I think it's easy to relate to the character of Tarzan as being kind of a loner who has a savage nature and is an outsider," he explained, "Spiderman has that same sort of persona, except that he lives downtown, instead of in the jungle. He had all these powers, but still felt like an outsider. That's generally the case with superheroes; they have this outsider sort of existential conundrum as well as some savage power that needs taming."

Keller Siegel plans to position EPIC ADVENTURES on the crest of the coming wave of Burroughs-consciousness. When asked how he would characterize this interpretation of the apeman, Steinmetz replied, "I think it's important for everybody to know that this is definitely an action-adventure-fantasy project, one that will be quite different from the previous efforts that Hollywood has attempted." □

THE ADVENTURES OF CAPTAIN SULU

STAR TREK: VOYAGER honors STAR TREK's thirtieth with "Flashback."

By Anna Kaplan

In a very special episode of *STAR TREK: VOYAGER* expected to air in September to honor the thirty-year anniversary of *STAR TREK*, viewers will discover that Tuvok (Tim Russ) spent some of his early Starfleet years on the U.S.S. *Exelsior*, under the command of Captain Sulu. Appropriately titled "Flashback," the episode features George Takei in his familiar role as Hikaru Sulu, as well as Grace Lee Whitney as Janice Rand.

The *Exelsior* and her captain were last seen coming to the aid of the *Enterprise-A* in *STAR TREK VI: THE UNDISCOVERED COUNTRY*, which was released in 1991. Takei has been lobbying ever since for a *CAPTAIN SULU* television series, frequently speaking at *TREK* conventions and asking fans to write Paramount. The character of Captain Sulu has been kept alive in novel form, as well as a series of audiocassette "Captain Sulu Adventures."

Said Takei, "*STAR TREK VI: THE UNDISCOVERED COUNTRY* [was] a perfect launching pad for a new series. I was the one dubbing it 'The Captain Sulu Adventures.' The subsequent shows have needed a little assistance, a little energizer from us. When Jimmy [James Doohan, Scotty] was on *THE NEXT GENERATION*, they had the healthiest ratings that they ever had. There seems to be a little need for help with the ratings for the other two

"We could logically have guest appearances by fellow colleagues of my generation," said Takei. "It's a perfect set-up for another spin-off of STAR TREK."



Nichelle Nichols, Uhuru of the original *STAR TREK* series, turned down a cameo in *STAR TREK: VOYAGER*'s special anniversary episode "Flashback."

shows. There wouldn't be that additional boost needed if you have 'The Captain Sulu Series' already organic to it, intrinsic to it. We could logically have, without too much of a stretch, guest appearances by fellow colleagues of my generation. So I think it's a perfect set-up for another spin-off of *STAR TREK*." Whitney agreed, noting, "George and I have been talking about doing a spin-off with the *Exelsior* for a long time."

Rumor has it that Paramount wanted an episode featuring at least someone from the original series to broadcast in honor of *TREK*'s anniversary, and it seems that Takei's efforts paid off with the writing of "Flashback." But the idea that he would be appearing in a *VOYAGER* episode made its way onto the Internet before Takei himself found out.

"It was in January of this

year that I got a phone call from a friend who told me that he saw on the Internet that I was doing a guest shot as Captain Sulu. I said, 'I know nothing about that,' and I said, 'Let me check with my agent.' I called my agent, and he said he [knew] nothing about that, Paramount hasn't called him. So I called my friend back and said, 'I think that's one of those rumors that you see on the Internet.'

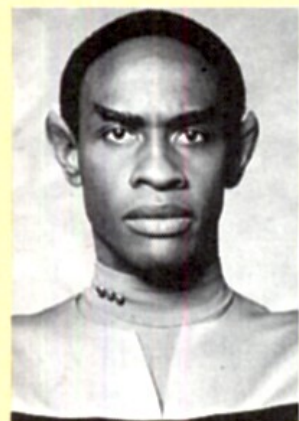
"Then the following month I was in Montreal. My agent called and said, 'Guess what? The Internet was right. They just called.' So I think it's through the Internet that one hears the confirmation of things.' Takei laughed and continued, "I didn't get a chance to talk to anybody. I read the script, and that is how it was absolutely and definitely confirmed to me."

Takei described the "Flashback" script, written by Brannon Braga, saying, "It's a very complex script, and a clever idea, how they merge our two worlds. It's a very imaginative science fiction notion that they use. It's organic to *STAR TREK*. Let me just leave you with that tantalization." Takei will not say more, having been sworn to secrecy about the plot.

Since Grace Lee Whitney appeared prominently on the bridge of the *Exelsior*, she was included in the cast. Both Takei and Whitney certainly qualify as representatives from the original *STAR TREK* series. Takei was at his familiar post as helmsman of the *Enterprise* when the first

episode "Man Trap" aired on September 8, 1966. Whitney was a featured performer, playing Yeoman Janice Rand during the first third of the original season. Takei continued as Sulu, through the animated series and six of the feature films, finally promoted to Captain in STAR TREK VI. Whitney, who left STAR TREK because of problems related to drugs and alcohol, reappeared briefly as Rand in STAR TREK: THE MOTION PICTURE, STAR TREK III, and IV. In VI, she joined the *Exelsior's* bridge crew.

In order to film "Flashback" the bridge of the *Exelsior* was rebuilt and many of the original bridge crew members were hired.



George Takei as Captain Sulu, *above*, meets Tim Russ as Tuvok *left*, and Kate Mulgrew as Captain Janeway on STAR TREK: VOYAGER.

Takei recalled, "I was amazed. They brought back the bridge crew of the *Exelsior*. So Boris [Lee Krutonog], the Russian helmsman who got a little nervous when things got tough, and Jeremy [Roberts], the actor who played Valtrane, are back. A couple of the extras who were quite [visible] prominently are back. So they did a very thorough job of recreating the crew.

"The set was new. It was a replica of the set we used then. They did an amazing job of replicating it. To be in that circular configuration, and with all those familiar faces, once we got into it, it felt like all those five years weren't there in between, like we had been working yesterday on the film version, and here we are doing this. It's an amazing trick that the environment and the people, the familiarity of the people, play on you. There was always that undercurrent of our getting back together, and the *Exelsior* coming back. So once you get into the meat of the work, and you're in that config-

uration, those five years evaporate."

Both Takei and Whitney enjoyed working with the VOYAGER crew. Noted Whitney, "It was great fun to work with Captain Janeway [Kate Mulgrew]. We just had a great time," Takei recalled. "I just worked with two of [the VOYAGER cast], Kate and Tim [Russ]. It was really great working with the two of them. They are very professional. Tim is the curator of STAR TREK history. There he is, the fourth generation of STAR TREK, and he's filling me in on the lore of the years that I had lived through and forgotten about. It was kind of an eerie feeling. He's very Vulcan in that respect. I guess all the actors who get cast as Vulcans really have something in them. The way Leonard [Nimoy] felt about his character and the culture that he was creating, and the fidelity to the core of that culture that was established, and the kind of integrity that Tim felt was essential. There were some rewrites

as a result of Tim's insistence on, or reminding people of the fact that something was not consistent with the established history or lore."

One actress from the original series who did not appear in "Flashback" was Nichelle Nichols. The original script contained a small cameo for her, but she decided not to accept the role. Said Takei, "Nichelle [Nichols] had a small role in it, a brief communication from the *Enterprise*, and I thought it would have been wonderful if she did it. That scene was there all the way to the day before we were to shoot it. I got a rewrite, and that scene wasn't there. So when I got home I phoned Nichelle immediately and said, 'They cut this out. Why is that?' She said, 'I chose to decline.' I said, 'Why? It's a lovely little cameo.' But apparently Nichelle was lobbying to not just communicate via the viewscreen. She wanted to beam over, and play a more organic and therefore more beefed-up role. She wasn't successful in that lobbying. I

think she should have done it. It certainly would have enhanced the show."

Speculation is rampant that "Flashback" may actually be the pilot of a new series for UPN. Whitney, who lives in Northern California, has actually rented an apartment in Los Angeles to be closer to all the action. Whitney noted about the idea of a series, "It was mentioned. Brannon [Braga] told me. He said that they left it an open-ended episode so they could bring us back. I didn't really get it until I left his office. It would be something, wouldn't it? So that's what we're kind of looking forward to."

Takei does not want to get his hopes up just yet. He has always been very busy with public service activities, recently having been appointed by President Clinton to the U.S.-Japan Friendship Commission. Would he have time for a leading role on a weekly television show? Said Takei, "My career takes priority, and I would have to make appropriate adjust-

ments to my civic activities." He is prepared to wait, noting, "Actually this is happening much later than when I thought it would. It took me 25 years to make the captaincy, so five years is nothing." Takei said he has figured out how he will know if there will be a new series. "I think I've pegged it," he laughed. "I've got to keep my eyes on the Internet." □

Grace Lee Whitney as Janice Rand joins Takei in the VOYAGER episode.



THE STUPIDS

By Dan Persons

Okay, let's get the obvious out of the way right off the bat. **THE STUPIDS**, starring Tom Arnold. I mean, what more do you need to know? A casting decision this clear-cut comes along maybe once a decade; it's such a no-brainer (hmmmm...) that one is tempted to note it and just leave it at that. Done, *fini*, turn the page and let's get on to that mad-slasher flick you *really* want to read about.

Oh, don't worry, we're not going to do that. For one thing, even a guy with Tom Arnold's rep deserves a smeggin' break now and

THE STUPIDS is as stupid does but is not DUMB AND DUMBER.



Tom Arnold as Stanley Stupid—the role he was born to play—with Jessica Lundy as wife June and Bug Hall and Alex McKenna as Buster and Petunia.

cause I know in some places people might be very disappointed if they see the film, and go, 'Well, wait a minute... no one's shitting in here!'"

Okay, so now we know what **THE STUPIDS** is *not*; what, then, is it? That, admitted Landis, is a far harder question to answer: "How do I explain the story? The movie takes place at all times on about four levels, because it's comedy based on misperception. There's reality, which is reality, then there's the Stupid family's perception of reality, which is very different from reality. Then, based on their reactions to their perceptions of reality, that has an impact on [the real] reality. So at any given time, it's four levels going on.

"I'm not being difficult. It's a difficult movie to describe. There's a lot of slapstick in it, but when you try to describe the plot, the plot is so Byzantine and convoluted... What I've learned, seeing it now many times, is that it takes adults about 20

minutes, 25 minutes until I start hearing the laughs, because they're so disoriented by how bizarre it is. It's like they've suddenly been dropped into the Bizarro planet, and they think, 'What the fuck is this?' Whereas children have no problem with it at all, understanding what's going on. I think it has something to do with preconceived notions of how people should respond to any situation. And these people... are different."

How different? Well, as based on the original children's books, the Stupids are the kind

DUMBER guys—and directed by John Landis, the man who turned food-fights into Olympic sport in **NATIONAL LAMPOON'S ANIMAL HOUSE** and helped retool the horror film in **AN AMERICAN WEREWOLF IN LONDON**, amongst other achievements.

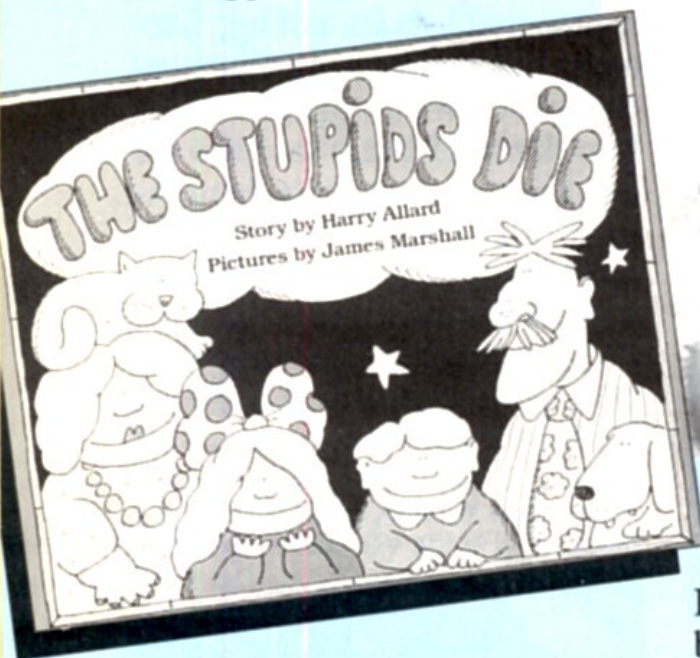
Thirdly, one shouldn't work on assumption alone—that **DUMB AND DUMBER** connection, for instance. Totally spurious, says Landis: "It shares with **DUMB AND DUMBER** some slapstick, there's physical comedy in it. But there's not one

scatological reference, there's not one sexual innuendo; there's no farting or vomiting. This is more coherent than **DUMB AND DUMBER**. I'm serious: this is a much more cohesive piece. Nonetheless, it is a comedy, like **DUMB AND DUMBER**, but **DUMB AND DUMBER** is basically adolescent, and this is much more for children.

"Because of the title there's an obvious connection in people's minds with **DUMB AND DUMBER**. Hopefully, that isn't a bad thing. I think it's a double-edged sword, though, be-

then. Or did you forget that his performance in **TRUE LIES** was one of the better things about that movie; and hadn't you noticed that, since the divorce, Roseanne's TV show has sucked big-time, leading one to the perhaps-unsettling conclusion that the volatile comedienne's ex may have been at least a *little* responsible for the program's engaging humor?

For another, **THE STUPIDS** is being released by New Line—those **DUMB AND**





Christopher Lee as the museum curator also played by Captain Kangaroo's Bob Keeshan, envisioned by Stanley Stupid as a character of pure evil.

“The Stupids are not, in fact stupid. They’re actually terribly clever; they’re just insane,” said director John Landis. “What they are is like aliens.”

funny as *THE SIMPSONS*, but I guess what it has that’s similar to the *SIMPSONS* is that it’s a really loving family. The Simpsons are pretty dysfunctional, but they all really love each other. This is not a dysfunctional family at all, in fact. The family values are extraordinary. They are loving and supportive of one another, loyal, brave... *very brave.*”

Rather hardy, too, given that the film was shot last year in Toronto and Ontario, over eight to ten weeks of the most excruciating summer on record. “You remember that heat wave when all those people died in Chicago?” asked Landis. “It was 120 degrees. We’re out there going, ‘*Let’s be funny! Uhhhhhhnnnnnn...*’ It was *hot!*”

Having previously made, one of the most expensive comedies ever, *THE BLUES BROTHERS*, Landis claimed the budget on *THE STUPIDS* did not get anywhere near such lavish proportions. “It’s deceptive on many levels, because there are beautiful matte paintings in there by Matte World, and some terrific spaceship miniatures and lovely aliens, done by Steve Johnson’s people. But, no, it’s not *BEN HUR*. We shot in Canada to save mon-

ey, because it’s thirty cents on the dollar.”

(Those Canadian locations may also explain the decidedly North-of-the-Border accent to another Landis staple: the celebrity director cameo. Providing walk-ons during the course of the film are such Canadian natives as David Cronenberg and Atom Egoyan, as well as Mick Garris, Costa-Gavras and, in his on-camera debut, Robert Wise.)

Landis continued, “There are a lot of very elaborate physical gags. And whenever you’re doing elaborate slapstick there are a lot of stunts. It’s not hard, it’s not comparable to brain surgery, but it does take a lot of time and effort to set things up. There are a lot of pretty fancy riggings to fly people. Now you do gags on wires and literally erase the wires on the computer—that was very interesting.”

Interesting as well was the act of pitching comedy on a gentler grade than Landis is normally accustomed to (*THE STUPIDS* will likely carry a PG rating by time of release). “It was a pleasure,” noted the director. “You have to be careful of stuff when you’re making a film specifically for children.

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of family who see nothing wrong with calling their dog Kitty and their cat Xylophone (with both pets rendered on-screen as stop-motion figures by those masters of comic creepiness, the Chiodo Brothers); they’re the kind of people who, when the lights go out, assume that they all have died and gone to heaven. It takes a rare cast to portray such idiocy, and Landis has got ‘em: along with Tom Arnold’s portrayal of Stanley Stupid (“The role,” even Landis admitted, “he was born to play”), Jessica Lundy portrays his beloved wife Joan, while Bug Hall (*THE LITTLE RASCALS*’ Alfalfa) and Alex McKenna portray their not-all-that-sharp scions, Buster and Petunia. The core cast is aided and abetted by Bob “Captain Kangaroo” Keeshan and Christopher Lee (both playing, thanks to *THE STUPIDS* warped world-view, the same

role), and Playmate of the Year Jenny McCarthy (“Which is unusual in a children’s film,” noted Landis, with an impressive degree of understatement.)

Landis—known usually for comedy of a decidedly raunchier bent—became involved in a children’s film at the behest of Savoy executive, Alan Greisman.

Landis was familiar with the books by James Marshall and Henry Allard, having read them to his kids. But he didn’t like the script. “It was terrible,” said Landis. “Essentially a standard comedy vehicle. I made a deal where I could have it re-written. I threw it out and started all over again. It took me a while to find a writer who had the sort of really odd sensibility I was looking for.”

That writer was Brent Forrester, better known for his work on *THE SIMPSONS*. But, said Landis, “it’s not like *THE SIMPSONS*. It’s hopefully as

Unabashedly unashamed to be toiling in the “kids movie” vineyard, Landis poses with the film’s aliens, makeups designed by Steve Johnson’s XFX.



ESCAPE FROM

Earthquakes, fires, riots—Snake Plissken

By Michael
Beeler

Walking on to the massive set of John Carpenter's *ESCAPE FROM L.A.* was like entering a composite history of all of the disasters that have plagued Los Angeles in the last few years. In the middle of the forbidding set a large camera track with an enormous 40-foot Chapman crane and a small army of crew members huddled around three video monitors and four portable heaters.

During a break in the filming, director John Carpenter explained how he happened to be back in *ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK* territory, on ground he covered in his 1982 independent hit. "Kurt Russell contacted me after the earthquake happened in L.A.," said Carpenter. "We've had riots and earthquakes and mud slides and fires over the last few years here in Los Angeles. He told me, 'Look, I really want to get together and do this movie—this sequel. It's the only sequel I want to do. I want to play [Snake Plissken] again. I think we have an L.A. story now.'"

"Kurt's basic idea concerned everybody who lives in L.A. We go through all this trauma, we have riots, we have earthquakes, we have crime, we have drive-by shootings, we have fires. It's a desert here. This is the most outrageous place to live and yet none of us can leave.

"None of us want to leave here. Why don't we leave? What's keeping us here? And, we both realized that we're all in denial. We thought that maybe we had kind of a funny



John Carpenter was reunited with (from left) star Kurt Russell; Tommy Causey, sound mixer; producer Debra Hill; and Joe Brennan, boom operator for *ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK*'s sequel.

story out of that. It was something that we could put Plissken into in order to experience L.A. That's the first reason. The second reason was that my agent said to me, 'Look, if you guys get together on this and write the screenplay yourselves, we can potentially set this up with a big budget and big studio and you can do a big-budget film.' The capitalist in me really responded to that. I truly am a capitalist. I'm a conservative in terms of money. I enjoy making money and I enjoy making movies. So, it was an opportunity."

Paramount Pictures quickly provided that opportunity, allowing Carpenter, Russell and producer Debra Hill to make their full onslaught sequel to their original 1982 science fiction adventure. The film stars Russell as the legendary, one-eyed outlaw Plissken, who resurfaces fifteen years after his escape from New York, to be forced once again into serving his country.

This time out Plissken finds

himself in Los Angeles in the year 2013. A devastating 9.6 earthquake, in the year 2000, has left Los Angeles an island completely separated from the mainland. Consequently it is used as a dumping ground for all of the social and political malcontents, who are no longer tolerated by the totalitarian right-wing Christian fundamentalist government of America.

When the President's daughter steals a top secret weapon

than it really is. So in vain, he's fought his way through L.A. trying to get this box when he really didn't have to."

Mimicking his character's reluctance, Russell, toward the end of the film's grueling two month film schedule, was recruited to promote the release of *EXECUTIVE DECISION*. Although Carpenter claimed it had very little impact on his film, it did take a toll on the actor and what was already a very de-

Russell and Valeria Golino as Taslima find themselves in a tight spot, as victims in a surgical theater—of the Surgeon General of Beverly Hills.



L.A.

is in his element.

manding schedule. "There wasn't a problem because we all discussed that it would only be good for everyone for him to do it," said Carpenter, concerning Russell's constant absences to do talk shows, interviews and promotions for EXECUTIVE DECISION. "I just think that's Kurt's least favorite thing to do in the entire universe.

"He's really good at doing it but if you know him really well, you see how much he hates it. By the time he was doing it we were nearing the end of shooting. He was very tired. He did, I would say, almost all his stunts in the movie and some of them were incredibly physical. I don't know of another actor that could have done this. He was pooped, I was pooped and we all had the flu. And it's just no fun to work when you have the flu and then have to do PR for another film."

The picture's finale was filmed in a setting where Plissken can have his showdown with the bad guys, who have taken over a trashed and decaying Disneyland-type amusement park. "This is The Happy Kingdom By The Sea, which is supposedly in Anaheim," said Hill touring the set. "A helicopter has been sent to pick up Snake Plissken. But the bad guys have seized it. So Snake has to try and recapture it in order to get out. "What we're shooting tonight is the vista vision plate for the helicopter, as it's taking off with Kurt Russell and the other people in it. We're shooting the scene from the ground as it's beginning to take off and all of the gang members are shooting. Later on we'll add a miniature helicopter, which almost crashes into Neptune's Mountain."

Production designer Lawrence G. Paull built the film's deserted amusement park on Universal's

famed clocktower set for BACK TO THE FUTURE.

"This is the same old court house square that everybody shot for years," said Paull. "This is the second time that I've had to use it and I wanted to do something that was different. In the film, it's many years after an earthquake and the park is in disuse. It didn't get hit by the earthquake badly but I still wanted to conceptually give it this very frayed, run-down, beat-up look.

"I wanted to change the street that everybody's seen. I revamped this street in '85 for the original BACK TO THE FUTURE. When I read the [ESCAPE FROM L.A.] script what immediately popped into my mind was coming back here again because I knew the buildings could be turned into a main street of an amusement park."

It was a very cold time in L.A. to be doing a film that was shot predominantly at night. "There are a couple of scenes where there's a lot of breath from the actors and you can almost see them shivering," said Carpenter. "I think that the coldest that it got was when we were out someplace near Westlake. It wasn't near the city. It was way out on a ranch. It got down to the 20s one night we were shooting.

"That's the coldest that I've been since filming THE THING [on refrigerated sets]. We all got grumpy. Night after night of it just wears you down. You do it for so many nights in a row, it just starts to really hurt after awhile."

Carpenter composed the film's score, with the help of Shirley Walker, who did the music for his MEMOIRS OF AN

Russell as Snake Plissken wearing his "stealth suit" to infiltrate a post-apocalyptic Los Angeles.



ESCAPE FROM L.A.

DIRECTOR JOHN CARPENTER

The filmmaker on his love/hate relationship with

By Michael
Beeler

John Carpenter needs a hit, and he's hoping ESCAPE FROM L.A. is it. Since the director burst on the scene with HALLOWEEN in 1978, after a string of successful and critically lauded low-budget efforts, his work in the big league has largely opened to mediocre box-office or critical indifference, if not outright hostility, or both. The public reaction to his work has mystified Carpenter. "It's so weird. It's just so bizarre to me," he said.

Debra Hill, Carpenter's HALLOWEEN producer with whom he is reunited on ESCAPE FROM L.A., noted the difficulty of living up to the expectations engendered by their first hit. "I don't think that anybody could have repeated the success story that John and I had on HALLOWEEN," said Hill. "Here's a picture that we wrote for free. I produced it for free and he directed it for free. It cost \$300,000 to make and it grossed \$55 million. There haven't been many success stories like that."

THE THING, Carpenter's step up to the majors for Universal in 1982, starred Kurt Russell and was a remake of Howard Hawks' classic about a hostile alien found in the frozen Arctic. Carpenter, who is a big fan of Hawks, returned to the source novella by John W. Campbell and added some really wild special effects. The outstanding effort had the misfortune to be released the same summer as E.T., and fared poorly at the boxoffice.

"I think there's a great sequel to THE THING," said Carpenter. "But I don't hear a great demand for that. People don't re-



Carpenter directs Kurt Russell in ESCAPE FROM L.A. Longtime friends, the two also worked together on THE THING and BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE CHINA.

member, but [THE THING] was hated upon its release. Hated! Hated by the fans. Hated by the audiences. Hated by the critics."

One of Carpenter's favorite films was 1988's THEY LIVE. Wrestler Roddy Piper starred as a lonely drifter who discovers aliens are living among us, that can only be detected through special glasses. Carpenter wanted to make a sequel, but found no interest. "I really loved that movie a great deal, just because it's such a nutty movie," said Carpenter. "But I don't think there's great demand out there for a sequel."

Another effort that Carpenter loved, but few cared for, was 1986's BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE CHINA, the project that led him to abandon the majors in search of more creative freedom. The film starred Russell as a sort of Indiana Jones-type trucker, who gets ensnared in an adventurous, tongue-in-cheek fiasco in Chinatown. "Actually I think they're planning to do a TV sequel of it over at Fox," said Carpenter. "But I wouldn't be involved in it. Again, that movie was hated when it was released.

Hated! Haaated! That movie did not get one good review.

"Kurt and I, we cared a lot about that film. It was something that we were really proud of. But it came out and it was put down and so you just have to say, 'Oh well, let's go on.' Such is the movie business."

At one time, Carpenter was developing a remake of THE CREATURE FROM THE BLACK LAGOON at Universal. "I've moved on from that," said Carpenter "That's now being developed by Ivan Reitman [ANIMAL HOUSE, GHOSTBUST-

ERS] as a comedy. I think it's going to be an inner city comedy—a black movie. You get it: *Black Lagoon*. Ha! Ha! Ha!"

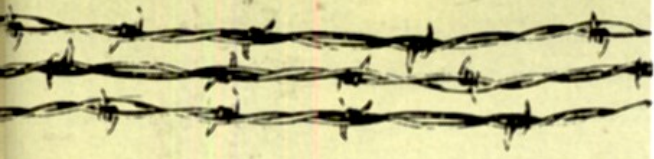
Both IN THE MOUTH OF MADNESS and VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED, Carpenter's two previous efforts had mixed receptions. Carpenter seemed to take it all in stride. "Both of those movies got some of the best mainstream reviews that I've ever gotten," he said. "The New York Times and The Los Angeles Times praised them. MOUTH OF MADNESS got amazing reviews.

"It is still playing over in Spain, where they believe it is a kind of Luis Bunuel movie. They think it's to be taken along the lines of PHANTOM OF LIBERTE. To me it was an enormous success. I'm disappointed that domestically both films didn't do better at the boxoffice. VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED was also amazing. I got some great reviews and I was totally condemned by others. Such as it goes with every film that I make. You have some people who like them and some people who hate them. Go figure."

Although the original release of HALLOWEEN was well re-

Carpenter with Russell and Steve Buscemi as Map to the Stars Eddie.





THE STREETS OF LOS ANGELES

“We shot in a lot of desolate areas in L. A.,” said Carpenter. “We couldn’t shoot on the streets because L. A. looks too beautiful. There’s not enough trashing we could do.”



Carpenter and producer Debra Hill in 1981, promoting the original *ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK*.

audiences.

ceived by audiences and critics alike, the four sequels that came after it have been mediocre at best. Part of the problem may be that Carpenter never went on to direct any of the sequels. He and Hill did write the screenplay for HALLOWEEN II and were actively involved in HALLOWEEN III: SEASON OF THE WITCH. But their connection with HALLOWEEN 4: THE RETURN OF MICHAEL MYERS and HALLOWEEN 5, was mostly limited to the financial end of the movies, since they both share the rights to the franchise.

Although Carpenter has his doubts concerning the possibility of a HALLOWEEN 6 being made, he does feel the franchise could be turned around. But, for the moment he doesn't see much hope of that happening. "I don't know if it is going to move on, man," said Carpenter. "I think it's dead. Right now it's Miramax that is involved with it, with their Dimension area. They released [HALLOWEEN 5] last fall and it didn't do very well. There are certainly ways to resurrect that genre. There are certainly ways to resurrect that character. But that's not the way that they're doing it. At least I don't feel that they are. I wouldn't say that my way is perfect either. But they'd have to spend some more money. They'd have to spend some bucks to get it good again.

"It's done non-union. They just throw it together. There are a lot of cooks in the kitchen. And that's the problem: there are a lot of folks with input. It's not a vision of one person."

Fellow horror filmmaker Clive Barker has also complained of the dimly inadequate budgets attached to his HELLRAISER and CANDY-MAN franchises. Noted Carpenter, "I know Clive well.

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INVISIBLE MAN. Unknown to many is the fact that Carpenter, whose father was a college music professor, has composed the dramatic scores for 15 of his film productions. "Yeah, as a matter of fact, he writes the music on the weekends," revealed Hill. "But, you know what's neat about John and working with a director who is a composer, is that he hears the music in his head as he is shooting the movie.

"He's pacing the movie based on the music that he hears. Sometimes music in a film is a little on top and fights with the scene. But during the filming of HALLOWEEN, he already had that theme in his head. He used to play me that theme. When we created what we called the longest walk in Hollywood, which was Jamie Lee Curtis (TRUE LIES, TRADING PLACES, THE FOG) going from one house to another, that theme was playing in his head as he worked. He didn't just haphazardly add it on."

Carpenter admitted that he had a lot of help from the homefront in dealing with the intense demands of this project. "Sandy King has a lot to do with the movie but not of-

ficially," said Carpenter, about his wife, who regularly viewed the feature's dailies with him. "She graciously allowed herself to simply become my wife and caretaker. She really stayed on my night schedule. I was on 70 nights. 70! Nights! We worked all the way through the winter time. I would get home in the morning and go to work at night. She stayed on my schedule and simultaneously took care of my son, her stepson, Cody, who had to go to school every morning. It was a full-time job."

Cody was involved in Carpenter's decision to cut his well-known pony tail. "I went to a flower shop with my son," said Carpenter. "I was explaining some truth of life to my son and the lady behind the counter leaned over and said, 'Listen to your grandpa!' My son gave a look to me and said, 'No dad, really, you don't look that bad.' But I realized that I was looking older than my years so I cut off my ponytail and cut my hair. I guess it's time to become a member of the establishment. I'll tell you what. As soon as I cut it I looked like I had more hair. It just seemed like a good thing to do. It's easy to take care of."

Carpenter, who had years

Russell challenges prisoner Isaac Hayes in *ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK*. Carpenter was the first to recognize Russell's potential as an action star.



earlier shot similar footage in the L.A. area for his film THEY LIVE, detailed some of the logistical problems of filming the current Los Angeles landscape. "We shot in a lot of desolate areas in L.A.," said Carpenter. "We picked a lot of earthquake sites in Northridge to shoot. We shot at a land fill area down in Carson, which was one of the stranger places. We really couldn't shoot on the streets because L. A. looks too beautiful. There's not enough trashing we could do. So, a lot of the movie was created in and around various desolate spots in L.A.

"We also had a couple of nights down in the kind of tenderloin district of L.A. in downtown L.A. We did one little street chase in this famous alley. It's always interesting to shoot downtown. It was a little strange. You never know what you're going to run into. Things in the '90s have gone a little more crazy. People don't walk up and ask for money any more. They come up with a gleam in their eye and a knife in their hand. But, we didn't have any problems."

Along with the homeless of this film, that were patterned after the third world, Paull created other twisted neighborhoods such as Gothic-styled Beverly Hills, gun-toting surfers on the beach, a gladiator-filled colise-

ESCAPE FROM L.A.

COSTUME DESIGN

Robin Bush created design from an asphalt palette.

By Michael Beeler

Costume designer Robin Michel Bush tried to capture a unique quality of Los Angeles in the clothes she created for the denizens of John Carpenter's *ESCAPE FROM L.A.* "This is a very large film," said Bush, who was decked out in a very loud metallic gold coat and black boots at Universal Studios. "It's a stylized film, in a lot of ways. I refer to it as the future past. It's sort of like the more things change, the more they remain the same.

"In any environment, when everything goes to shit, people go back to their roots and we tried to do that with these costumes. With the gang members we sort of hit on every stereotypical field back through history. We got to do a lot of fun things with that. We used a lot of found things, what would be left after the earthquake. We had some wonderful costumes. We did a hundred hookers on Hollywood and Sunset Blvds. We referred to them as 'a hundred hookers, a hundred fantasies!'"

"We also had the vendors, who appear with the hookers and the gang members on Sunset Boulevard," said Bush. "The vendors are sort of a take-off from a third world country. We created Roadkill Man, among others, who is barbecuing raven and squirrel and rat. His costume is comprised of the animal pieces that he's not barbecuing. We also had a dentist/barber, whose costume we made from an old piece of burlap, with other findings. So, you can go right out in the streets and get a tooth pulled and have your head shaved at the same time.

"My designs came out of the third world and the rubble. The palette of this film literally came from the asphalt. You won't see a lot of red. There's



Looking sleek in one of the over one thousand costumes created for *ESCAPE FROM L.A.*, Peter Fonda as Surfer Dude Pipeline confronts Russell.

an undertone of grey." Bush worked closely with production designer Lawrence G. Paull and Carpenter. "That's where we got most of the ideas."

Coupled with the creation of all of the freakish outfits of the film was the highly constrained time line for the actual designing and manufacturing of the clothes. Bush credited her ensemble crew for their quick response. "We had a short prep for a picture this big," said Bush. "I think what has helped us has been this fantastic crew. I have Drama Log Award winners on my crew. I have costume designers, who are working as costumers on this particular show. I have expertise beyond belief. With that help and a fantastic work room we pulled this together."

Besides Plissken, the one group that remained true to the original *ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK* were the United States Police force, designs Carpenter wanted carried over. "Steve Lumis, who is the gentleman that designed *ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK*, has been the head

of our made-to-order work room on this show. He had a really good feel both for John and for Kurt and for the *deja vu* effect that we're dealing with on this," said Bush. "We worked fast and furiously. Everything, of course, had to be aged and distressed. And you can't go to your local Bullocks Department Store to pull it. We pulled a lot of our materials for these clothes from junk yards, hardware stores and down town alley ways."

A couple of other factors aided Bush's task force as they dragged over a thousand costumes all over the city during principal photography. "We have three 40-foot trailers that we're carrying for the big scenes," said Bush. "There are a lot of costumes. But each group of costumes is pretty much compartmentalized. Certainly the Black gang members don't wear what the Mexican gang members wear. From our end, we simplified it a bit."

Bush, who has worked on Carpenter's *IN THE MOUTH OF MADNESS* and *VILLAGE OF THE DAMNED*, as well as *STAR TREK II: THE WRATH OF KHAN*, was a special education teacher who switched gears to go to work for Western Costume. "At that time they were the largest costume company in the world and it was like an apprenticeship," said Bush. "I learned from some of the best in the business. I was fortunate enough to work with Bill Travia and Dorothy Jenkins and Edith Head and a lot of those designers from the old school. I was taught properly the basics to begin with. I just worked my way up. I did a little apprenticeship at Paramount [Pictures] as the department foreman and at a number of oth-

Left to right: Steve Buscemi (Map to the Stars Eddle), George Corraface (Cuervo) and A. J. Langer (Utopia)—third world-and-rubble design.





Costume designer Robin Bush and Russell, keeping Snake suitably rugged. The film is Bush's sixth with director Carpenter.

er studios and then started doing television and film. Slowly my reputation began to speak for itself."

Working with the legendary Head, who garnered 35 Academy Award nominations and won eight Oscars during her phenomenal career, helped Bush deal with the extensive work load of *ESCAPE FROM L.A.*, her first credit as costume designer. "From Edith Head I learned to keep my ears open and my mouth closed," she said. "She also taught me how to delegate. And, that has helped me over the years. Especially on a film this big. On some of our huge crowd nights, we've had 12 to 15 costumers working for us here on the set, to dress and distress everybody and then another five people back in the costume department manufacturing the clothing."

Just keeping track of the hundreds of costumes for the surfer dudes, gladiators, *Queen Mary* denizens, silicon freaks of Beverly Hills and all of the various gang members was, in itself, a big chore. There was a wonderful hooker who had a helmet on her head, with bicycle handles affixed on the side of the helmet," said Bush. "Someone stole it. Can you believe that? The loss and damage on this show, I'm afraid, is going to be staggering due to the creative nature of some of these costumes and

the volume of people, even though we have a check in and check out procedure. I think that people would rather steal a costume than get paid for the evening.

"It's pretty funny. We had four guys spilt from the coliseum, where we were filming Spartacus-type gladiators in a fight scene similar to the one in *ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK*, but different. One of the guys left with his costume and about a week later showed up at Universal Studios, at the wardrobe department, with the clothes bundled up in a ball. He handed them to the lady that runs the department and said, 'These are yours.' There was a tag on the inside that said Universal Pictures. She didn't know the man, he wasn't a costumer, she had never seen him before. And, he said, 'I just saw that it had your tag.' So, he stole it from us but he was good enough to return them to Universal," Bush laughed.

Through the entire ordeal, Bush considered the film, her sixth with Carpenter, a "wonderful experience. You could wait your whole life to get a film like this, where the sky is the limit. Working with John on something like this is just the greatest. He does his homework. He knows what he wants to see. He's a professional. He's pleasant and he always gives you an answer. You don't get better than that." □

LAURENCE PAULL, DESIGNER

"Conceptually the design challenge was to create a world of the future that was very disturbing. We've created a look and a style that is very oppressive."

um and the transvestite-led community on the docked *Queen Mary*. "Even on this island, which is desolate and separated, there are the haves and the have nots," said Paull. "Our heavy, Cuervo Jones (George Corraface: CHRISTOPHER COLUMBUS THE DISCOVERY), is one of the haves, along with Hershe [Pam Grier], one of our characters that lives on the *Queen Mary*. These people are living a lot better than all of the people that are on the streets.

"Conceptually the design challenge was to create a world of the future that was very disturbing, with the look of what can happen with a very devastating earthquake. Regardless of the story itself, in the film we've created a look and a style that is very oppressive and very similar to what you find in other parts of the world."

Costuming was used to accent the various groups that inhabit this futuristic world. "Each one of our principal characters has a distinctly different look on this show, which was a lot of fun," said costume designer Robin Michel Bush. "Pam Grier [*SOMETHING WICKED THIS WAY COMES*], who plays Hershe is

a transvestite. She use to be Car Jack Malone. That was just an incredible piece of work. So, we fashioned her character as someone who would be very much at home on the *Queen Mary*. She tore down draperies to make her costume. I found some wonderful 35-year-old gold fabric in the Paramount archives that I was allowed to use and create from."

Scripting the film, which was co-written by Carpenter, Russell and Hill, and then finding a home for it, came across as one of the easier tasks of making the movie. "Let's see," said Hill, trying to recall the time line of how the script evolved. "We sold the script in May [1995]. So I think we started writing it in September of '94. It took about eight months to write the script in collaboration.

"The idea was to put everything into the script. The original script that we sold to Paramount was about 146 pages. There was a lot of interest in it. [Paramount President] Sherry Lansing had always been supportive of it. She chased it for a long time. The afternoon that

Carpenter directing the original *ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK* at Sepulveda Dam with cinematographer Dean Cundey (right) in 1981.



we went out with the spec script, we had already done a budget report, so that we knew how much money we needed to produce the picture. It sort of went out as a package deal.”

According to Carpenter, it was Hill, who shares with him the rights to some of his most memorable films, who initially got the ball rolling on this project. “Debra produced HALLOWEEN, THE FOG and ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK with me,” explained Carpenter. “I met her originally in 1976. She was my script supervisor on ASSAULT ON PRECINCT 13.

“She and I were dating in 1978 and I said, ‘How would you like to try your hand at this little low-budget movie that I have? Maybe you could produce it. It’s called HALLOWEEN.’ We did that and then she went on to produce several other things. She was the one who hosted the cooking of this movie. She said, ‘Come on over. Kurt’s coming over. Let’s talk about it.’ She kind of got me back into the fold again.”

Hill went on to add that the script, as well as the budget of the film were eventually pared down a bit. “It was a long script so it had to get down to a reasonable length. The idea was that we were selling a spec script. We wanted to put a lot of

Russell as the original Snake in 1981’s ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK, the master criminal released from prison to rescue the President.



DESIGNING ON A BUDGET

“Basically I tried to go, as I do on every film, as far as I can with a concept,” said Laurence Paull, production designer. “Before someone literally just says, ‘Stop!’”



Snake Plissken (Russell) and the Surgeon General of Beverly Hills (Bruce Campbell) in the surgical theater in ESCAPE FROM L. A.

exciting things in it and let the studio tell us what they liked best. Once we sold it to Paramount we had to get it down to a workable draft. We also had to take budget considerations into account because originally we felt we needed \$56 million. We’re now at \$50 million.”

Working for Paramount was not a decision that Carpenter approached lightly. After the fiasco he experienced during the production of BIG TROUBLE IN LITTLE CHINA, the seasoned filmmaker had publicly vowed to work only on smaller independent-type projects. The process of returning to the constraints of a big studio was eventually made easier when contractual agreements were established guaranteeing him greater control of the finished product.

“This experience has been great,” admitted Carpenter. “I really had a lot of support from the studio. First of all they believe in it. Sherry Lansing believes in it a great deal. My feeling is that during the production end of it they’ve been extraordinary. Usually that’s where you can run into some problems, because they’re constantly trying to hack at you and get your budget down.

“I worked with a man who is the vice-president of physical production—I believe that’s what his title is—Fred Gallow and he was just brilliant. He’s an old-timer and he knows what he’s doing. We just didn’t have any problems at all. My job as a director is to bring the movie in on schedule and on budget, if I possibly can. That’s why I did my job. It came in under [the originally budgeted \$50 million]. We finished on schedule. I did my job as a professional and the studio respects that. Creatively they’ve been involved and helpful with the screenplay. I don’t mind their input. It’s been very good and they’re very nice people. We had a real good relationship. So, I can’t complain at all.”

Commenting on the difference between making the original ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK for \$7 million versus the \$50 million budget they had for ESCAPE FROM L.A., Hill said, “I don’t really think that you can do that sort of comparison because 16 years and state of the art digital effects are very different today. A lot of the movie is above the

line costs. At least \$20 million has to do with actors, writing, directing and rights. I think it’s safe to say that we’ve made this picture for about \$28 million below the line. Comparable to other action pictures in the market place, it’s inexpensive.”

Budgetary constraints did effect certain aspects of Paull’s design for the film, but none that he felt were significant to him or to the audiences. “There are always compromises,” admitted Paull. “There are a few sets that I would have made bigger and more extensive. At the beginning and end of the film we have this fire base which is on the mainland of The United States. It’s a big concrete bunker kind of set.

“For the exterior shots I remodeled the Tillman Reclamation Plant in Van Nuys, which is a water reclamation plant. The interior shots were done on stage. The compromise there was, how big is big? How long is the corridor? Instead of it being 250 feet long, it’s 150 feet long. It’s those types of compromises that you make. Basically I tried to go, as I do on every film, as far as I can with a concept before someone literally just says, ‘Stop!’”

Paull said his focus was not on the constraints but on the fun of designing. “It was fun,” Paull noted, “designing all of the matte shots and all the major optical shots, which we’ve done with a lot of paintings.

“Then there was the other half of the coin where we designed the look of the mainland and the mainland set pieces, such as the helicopter and the submarine that Snake Plissken takes from the mainland out to the island of L.A. All these tech kinds of set pieces, which is the total flip side of the devastation that we have here. It’s been a very comprehensive design assignment, but I really enjoyed it.”

Paull explained that throughout the process Carpenter didn’t have any problems with the designs or any of the concessions made along the way. “John was incredibly receptive to 95% of what I came up with,” said Paull. “I started the process by basically building the design layer upon layer. First we talked about the people in shacks and then we talked about all of the

ESCAPE FROM L.A.

PRODUCTION DESIGN

Visions from BLADERUNNER to the third world.

By Michael Beeler

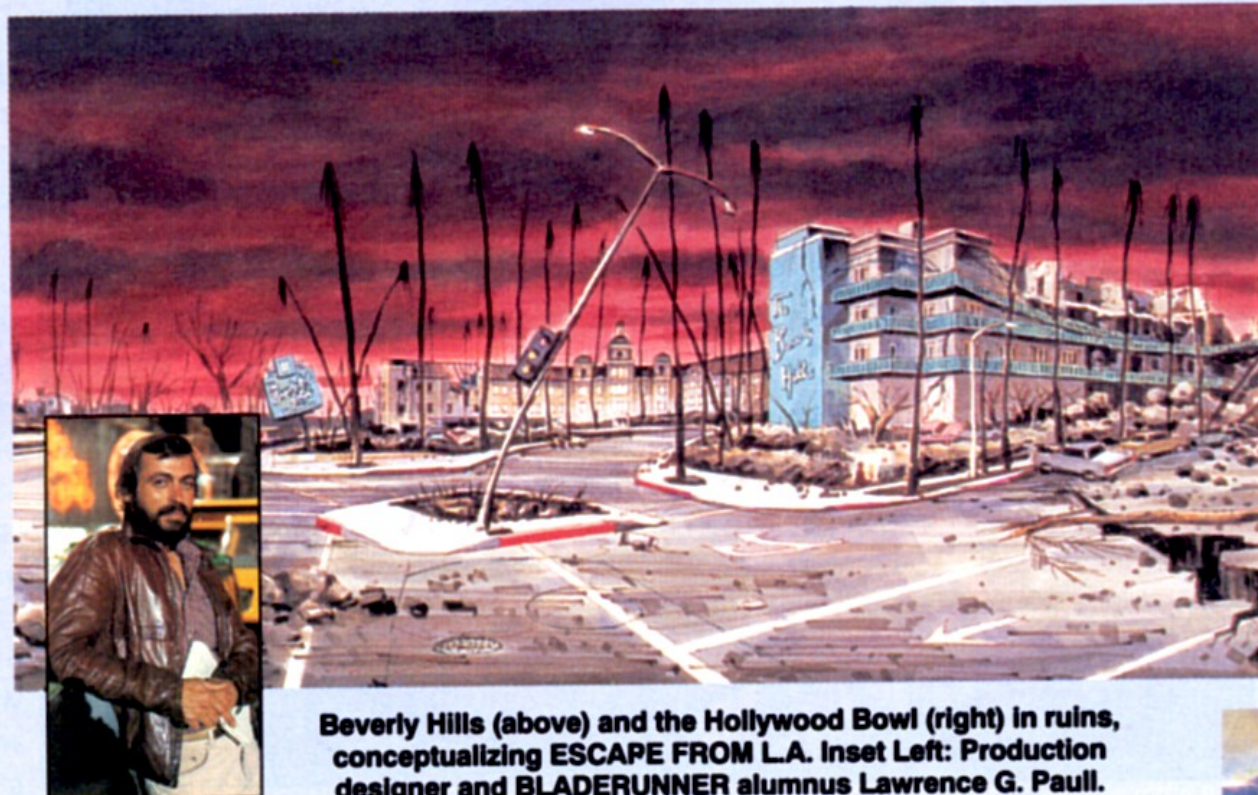
"We're not trying to be soothsayers about what the future is going to be," said production designer Lawrence G. Paull. "I've been in that position before, when a futuristic version of Los Angeles that I developed did sort of come true."

That was Paull's vision for Ridley Scott's *BLADERUNNER*, developed with Syd Mead in 1981. In that film Paull portrayed Los Angeles, in the year 2020, as high-tech, multicultural, polluted and decaying. Almost 15 years later, much of what Paull envisioned from a script that was loosely based on Philip Dick's source novel, *Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep?*, has come true.

It's not surprising then that the *Los Angeles Times* seemed to go out of its way to refute the possibility that Paull's new vision of a water-encircled Los Angeles Island was completely impossible.

"I read some of those articles," revealed Paull, who won the British Academy Award for *BLADERUNNER*, along with an Academy Award nomination here in the States. "One of them stated that they talked to some seismologists and they said, 'Oh, we could never have an earthquake of a 9.6 magnitude! This is impossible!' My answer to that always is: every time we have an earthquake in and around Los Angeles, someone from Cal Tech gets on TV and says, 'Well, yeah, we just discovered this new fault, with this new earthquake, that we've never known about before!' Seismologists and weather men, as far as I'm concerned, are involved in a guessing game."

The Los Angeles that was



Beverly Hills (above) and the Hollywood Bowl (right) in ruins, conceptualizing *ESCAPE FROM L.A.* Inset Left: Production designer and *BLADERUNNER* alumnus Lawrence G. Paull.

scripted jointly by John Carpenter, Kurt Russell and Debra Hill is very different from the one that Ridley Scott conceived for *BLADERUNNER*. "When I read the [*ESCAPE FROM L.A.*] script, I sort of gulped a lot," said Paull. "I approached it differently because there was a whole series of other factors that were happening in this version of Los Angeles."

Paull outlined some dynamic differences between designs for the two films. "There's very little electrical power in this L.A. and that means there's no lights at night like you had in *BLADERUNNER*. There is also a lot of outright devastation that wasn't in Scott's film."

For those reasons Paull's take on *ESCAPE FROM L.A.* has a completely different feel to it. "As a designer it presented a totally different type of challenge," said Paull. "And that was to create a look and a style that showed what could possibly be in the future after this ugly earthquake and still give it a great deal of what I call style, where it has a distinct look about it. When we got to scenes that we did on Sunset Boulevard, rather than just having a few broken buildings and things

sort of askew, I took the concept that Sunset Boulevard was completely devastated.

"When Snake Plissken comes out of an area, after he leaves Hollywood Boulevard, he walks into oblivion. The devastation just goes on for blocks and blocks. It's very, very scary to think about that. It sort of parallels what just recently appeared in the news about what happened up in Oregon, where thousands of people lost their homes due to the awful floods. The same thing has to do with earthquakes. You just get absolutely totally devastated and you have nowhere to go. The banks are gone, there are no ATM machines anymore, there's no gas or vehicles that work—there's nothing."

Paull admitted that much of what he brought to this new vision of Los Angeles in the future came from his recent exposure to the poverty of third world nations. "I've done a lot of traveling to the near East and the far East," said Paull. "Once, while I was in Egypt, just outside of Cairo, I was driving in a van, going to the pyramids. At one point I looked off to my right and there was this big huge cemetery. They call it the

City of the Dead because all these homeless people are living in there. They've taken corrugated metal and packing cartons and whatever they can scrounge up and they've made a city in the cemetery.

"The government won't let tourists go there. I just saw it as I was driving by. They would not let me stop and photograph it at all because they're embarrassed by it. I also



passed by other areas where the houses had been torn down. The streets were littered with these shacks. In the middle of the streets were people huddled around fires in the evening trying to keep themselves warm because there was no heat. There were no toilet facilities, no electricity—there's nothing."

Paull noted that his travels in Africa also had an impact on his designs. "I've been to parts of Africa where I've seen the same thing," said Paull. "People living in mud huts with tin roofs on them, if they're lucky. There's no heat or electricity or anything like that. They're quite literally living off the land. I started thinking about those types of places in developing the design of this film. That was the direction that I went in for the look of the film: that there are these people that are the have-nots. I just took it to an extreme." □

ESCAPE FROM N.Y.

FILMING THE ORIGINAL

Carpenter's vision of noir western set in the future is a

By Michael Beeler

On a darkened street, in a ruthless town, a lone and defiant outlaw stepped out into the night and consequently become a part of cinematic history. The production of John Carpenter's original *ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK* blended his love of the unbridled rawness of classic westerns with his disdain for the controlled, highly stifled, Nazi-oriented future he fears the world is racing toward.

Created 15 years ago, as a noir western set in a trashed futuristic New York that had been converted into a walled penal colony, it was "the progenitor of science fiction prison films." Some of its many imitators include *DEMOLITION MAN*, *NO ESCAPE*, *FORTRESS*, *THE RUNNING MAN*, *DEADLOCK* and *ALIEN 3*.

Carpenter cast his long-time friend Kurt Russell, who had previously worked with him on *ELVIS* and *THE THING*, in the title role of Snake Plissken. The stoic hero of the film was characterized as a high tech version of a Clint Eastwood-styled spaghetti western gunslinger.

Lee Van Cleef, who played Police Commissioner Bob Hauk and coerced Plissken to attempt the impossible escape, was cast largely due to his extensive background in westerns like *HIGH NOON*, *FOR A FEW DOLLARS MORE* and *HOW THE WEST WAS WON*.

"Snake Plissken is a sort of anti-hero," said Debra Hill, who produced the original as well as its new sequel. "His character is not the terminator. He doesn't shoot to kill. His *raison d'être* is to survive the next ten seconds. Every thought pattern, everything he does instinctually, is to



Snake Plissken asks directions from Brain (Harry Dean Stanton) in *ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK*, Carpenter's progenitor of science fiction prison films.

survive. He doesn't do anything premeditated. [*ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK*] is a western, where people are bad and you need that instinct to survive. You need it just to stay alive for another day."

The script, which was written by Carpenter and Nick Castle, has the President's jet hijacked by the Soldiers of the National Liberation Front of America. The rebels, attempting to cripple the conservative government by killing the President, crashes Air Force One into New York. Unfortunately, for the rebels, the President [Donald Pleasence] survives and is taken as a hostage by gangsters lead by the Duke [Isaac Hayes]. The film follows Plissken as he battles his way through the criminally infested streets of New York, in his attempt to rescue the President.

Finding a place that personified that deadly landscape into which Plissken is thrust, via a sail plane, was one of the more difficult parts of making the movie happen. Recalled Carpenter, "Production designer Joe Alves and I discussed where to shoot," said Carpenter. "We

decided that New York was not going to work because the look there would be much too impossible to control and make it look like a devastated city. I suggested going on a movie back lot and kind of trashing it.

"But Joe said, 'You know, that's not really going to do it either because the texture of a real street is not like a back lot.' There's something that you know that's real in a street rather than a back lot, which looks like a back lot. So we sent out our associate producer

across the country. He went to look at various places that had been either devastated by fire or that were kind of bad neighborhoods. He went to the Midwest, the South and ended up in St. Louis, where they had a fire in the '70s."

Added Hill, "We sent Barry Bernardi, who was our location manager, who also served as our associate producer, on a sort of all-expense-paid trip across the country looking for the worst city in America. He stopped off at various places and they were much too clean and unworkable. He eventually called us up from St. Louis. There had

been a recent fire, which had destroyed about 20% of the downtown area. Block after block was burned-out rubble. In some places there was absolutely nothing, so that you could see three and four blocks away these brown stone buildings in the distance."

Once they decided on St. Louis for most of the exterior shots of the film, the process became easier because of the city's willingness to completely cooperate with Carpenter and the needs of his cast and crew.

In 1981, Carpenter mounted the action economically on the redressed streets of St. Louis, where a recent fire had burned out several downtown blocks.



cult favorite.

According to Carpenter, "They let us do anything that we wanted to. They would shut down street lights for blocks and blocks. It was the right place. So we just decided to go there, not only because of the look, but also because the cooperation of the city was fantastic."

The Sepulveda Dam Recreation Area, in the San Fernando Valley of the Greater Los Angeles area, was shot for the opening sequence, serving as the center for prison's Police force, and married to a background shot that was done in New York. "We only went to New York for one shot," said Hill, "a helicopter shot coming around the head of the Statue of Liberty. In the opening shot we're panning down as you see one of the actors walk out of the Statue of Liberty and then past this kind of black building that he went into. When we came out we were in a base here at the Sepulveda Dam. We were able to actually make the picture look as if it was all shot in New York."

Hill noted that model miniatures were also used in order to get wide scope shots of the decaying metropolis set in the year of 1997. "We also built a fairly huge scale miniature of

Snake makes his escape with the rescued President, Donald Pleasence.



A family affair: Snake and Maggie, action heroine, played by Carpenter's then-wife, Adrienne Barbeau, in ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK.

Manhattan Island from the point of view of the Statue of Liberty. From that we were able to get the vantage point from Liberty Island to Manhattan. We were also able to do miniatures for the helicopters, as well as the sequence where [Plissken] flies in on a glider."

Filming the end sequence of the movie, where Plissken attempts to get the President out of New York, resulted in the production company actually purchasing a bridge in the heartland of America. "It was a little bridge that crossed the Mississippi, between Missouri and Indiana," said Hill. "We filmed the end there. We purchased it from the government for a dollar and then we gave it back to them for a dollar so that they wouldn't have any liability. We bought it for about three months. Basically it was a bridge that was not used any longer."

Co-scripter Nick Castle, who used to play in a band with Carpenter, was also employed to write the song, 'Everyone's Going To New York,' performed in an old theater by five men dancing in women's clothing. "It was sort of a family affair," admitted Hill. "I think it was that way more so on ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK than ESCAPE FROM L.A. because at that time John was married to Adrienne Barbeau (Maggie) and Kurt Russell was married to Season Hubley [the girl encountered in the Chock Full o' Nuts building]

and then co-producer/first assistant director Larry Franco was Kurt's brother-in-law. That was the difference between the original and the sequel."

The other difference between the two films, was the excitement that Carpenter, Russell and Hill felt while filming the original. "Personally I prefer shooting [ESCAPE FROM L.A.] in Los Angeles because I love being at home," said Hill. "Anytime I can shoot at home, I would choose to do so. But, it was really fun going to do ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK in St. Louis. It was our first big show. It was our first teamster show. It was the biggest movie budget that John, Kurt and I had ever had. John and I went into it as kids that kind of robbed the candy store. You know what I mean. It was a big time for us and we loved it. It was great. We really, really enjoyed it."

Though Carpenter co-wrote the screenplay for the 1990 TV western EL DIABLO, which won him a Cable Ace Award for Best Screenplay, ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK, up to now, is the closest he's gotten to directing the western he yearns to make. "I really like Snake Plissken: his adventures and his attitude toward life," said Carpenter. "Making the original movie was a great time. We had a whole lot of fun. Of course, I still would love to do a real western: a real cowboy movie. Maybe they'll let me do one some day." □

homeless people, then creating the night markets, with all these vendors on the streets. They bought into all of it and I couldn't be happier."

Happiness along with the fun of seeing this film begin production was something that Hill could identify with, especially in comparison to the making of a number of other films with Carpenter. "The original film that we did was fifteen years ago," said Hill. "The technology has changed a lot during that time, which has made this film so much more fun to make. There are so many resources out there to help us make the vision of the screenplay, to make it come to life. There's the CGI, the miniatures and the matte work now that they do. We're really having a lot of fun. And we have a healthy budget. We have enough money to pay for the vision that is on the paper. While filmmaking is always a struggle and you never have enough time, you know we are finding it a little easier on this picture."

"Sure we have a lot of headaches. Yeah, we have a lot of locations. We also have a lot of extras, lots and lots of extras. It's big. Very, very big. But you have to remember that ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK was done for \$7 million, HALLOWEEN

Shooting his way out of a tight spot Snake characteristically plays some L. A. hoops in ESCAPE FROM L. A.



ESCAPE FROM L.A.

TRASHING LOS ANGELES

Production designer Lawrence Paull's devastation

By Michael Beeler

"A very humorous story happened while we were filming ESCAPE FROM L.A.," revealed production designer Lawrence Paull, about shooting in the Los Angeles area. "Another film company scouted a location after we had just finished dressing it. They said, 'Oh we can't shoot here! It looks like they've had a lot of destruction of this building!'"

"They said that because there were giant piles of rubble all over the sidewalk and the street. So we were doing our job because it really looked like the buildings and the whole block was literally just devastated. And that, of course, was the whole look and style that we were after. We wanted to show what this type of devastation would look like."

Creating that look was a monumental undertaking. It included working with, among others, the Los Angeles Department of Water and Power in order to actually turn off the lights in entire sections of downtown Los Angeles. It also required the expertise of a number of location managers, who Paull continually praised as the best in the business. These managers were responsible for trashing the city at night and then making sure it was put back together in the morning when the city's work force returned to its daily grind.

"It's a very big film," said Paull, surrounded by a number of his aids. "We're trying to continually keep Los Angeles film friendly. Our location department has to remind the city of that fact very often, don't you guys?!" There was boisterous laughter from Paull's staff.

"Every time we went on to



Russell films a bike chase on the streets of L.A., shut down and redressed for night shoots. The city cooperated by turning off the lights in entire sections of downtown.

the streets, no matter where we went, it was basically a very intensive design challenge to deal with at every location," said Paull. "Doing both interiors and exteriors we have literally turned this city upside down. Overall the city has been incredibly cooperative and the merchants have been terrific."

The cast and crew zig-zagged their way around Los Angeles filming in places such as Simi Valley, The Queen Mary in Long Beach, The Union Train Station, The Biltmore Hotel, Griffith Park and The Coliseum. But their greatest logistical nightmare was probably realized while filming in the heart of the city, on a seven block section of Fourth Street. Every night in this extremely busy part of the city they completely trashed the streets to create their intended vision of an earthquake induced wasteland. The process included shutting off all traffic signals, billboards, street lights and building lights. It also required the audacious task of removing parking meters, news racks and anything else that suggested

that this area was a normal part of a working city.

The entire process was much more intense than what was required to film the original ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK, that depicted the city of New York as a walled prison. "The difference was that the first one was shot in St. Louis," explained Greg Alpert, one of three location managers on the production crew. "A good part of the New York stuff was shot there. The attraction of St. Louis was because a part of the city had been de-

stroyed in a big fire.

"There were entire city blocks that were bombed out and deserted. They had the run of the place. They had entire grids of lights that were just not in existence. It was almost as if they could do whatever they wanted. On this film we still do whatever we want, but here we are dealing with all these city agencies, department heads, building owners and the general public."

The sheer scale of the operation was enormous as the crew that sometimes numbered almost a thousand was supported by 30 fully loaded trucks and semis, working on the already congested city streets.

Noted Alpert, "That was always a real kick when you had 15 different city offices and government agencies out there removing parking meters, 'NO LEFT TURN' signs and 'MAIN STREET' signs. And then watching at seven p.m. exactly on the dot, because that's when the city will allow you to do a full street closure. All of a sudden, boom—traffic signals are turned off down the street as far as the eye can see. We had people in all of these various buildings on radio so we could com-

L.A. Kingpin Cuervo Jones rallies his troops, filmed on Paull's redressed set of Universal's BACK TO THE FUTURE village square clocktower.



look for L.A.

municate to them to turn off whatever lights were left on in the buildings."

The timing of the shoot also added to the headaches. "A lot of the stuff we did was in-between Christmas and New Years," said Alpert. "I think because of that a lot of city agencies and city offices were undermanned or not manned at all. Adding to the problem was that our idea of an emergency meant we needed it done three days ago and the city's idea of an emergency was to put it on a schedule and get to it when they could."

The preparation that was required even before the crew hit the street was equally, if not more, intense. "We were dealing with literally dozens and dozens of buildings," said Alpert. "And it's not just one person that you go to in each building and say, 'Oh by the way could you just turn off all of your lights?' You're dealing with every single floor and every single business on those floors. We had to work with the building owners and all of their maintenance people. It required getting all of the approvals of the city and getting the signatures from everyone involved so that everybody knew about it. A lot of times the crew has no idea what you've pulled off. They'd get down there and they'd see, 'Oh yeah it's dark. What a great thing. You found someplace that had the street lights off.'"

Such is the nature of a location manager's job. The audience, as well as their co-workers, seldom, if ever, noticed what they did. "The bottom line is that nobody cares what we do as long as it gets done," concluded Alpert. "They don't want to hear how it happened. For us, the reward is that really good feeling we got when it all worked out." □

FROM NEW YORK TO L. A.

"The big difference between the two movies is ESCAPE FROM L. A. is a lot more ambitious film," said Carpenter. "It's a bigger canvas. It's a bigger adventure."

for \$300,000 and THE FOG for a few million. Even John's INTO THE MOUTH OF MADNESS was done for around maybe \$12 or \$14 million. It wasn't that much money. For us, this is really like being a bunch of kids in a candy store. It's so much fun to be able to do this."

Hill joined forces with long-time friend and colleague Lynda Obst in 1985 to form the independent production company Hill/Obst Productions. Since ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK, she's had a career that seems to mirror that image of a kid in a candy store. "I was one of the first women to do action films," said Hill, who also worked on THE FISHER KING, THE DEAD ZONE and HBO's REBEL HIGHWAY series. "Women's pictures, when I first came into Hollywood, were mostly just love stories. Women directors and producers were perceived as doing only women-related stories: slow, not interesting and no action."

"When we did HALLOWEEN and then THE FOG and then ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK, I think that it helped. It set women up in the market place and showed that we could be just

as commercial as men. It has definitely helped. Now you have a lot of women coming up through the ranks that aren't making traditional women's pictures. It's definitely changed. The fact that Sherry Lansing green-lighted this picture is so cool!"

Once the filmmakers were given the go-ahead by Paramount, Carpenter got a slight case of cold feet concerning his ability to bring the energy of the original to the sequel. "The first thing that I noticed this time out was that I was very worried, right before we started shooting, that I was going to be unable to slip back into the style of the first movie," he said. "I had written the original screenplay in 1974. So you're talking about a lot of years ago."

"I had gone on to make other kinds of films and I really had to go back and rediscover what it was that drove that first movie stylistically. Strangely enough, the first day on the set I realized, 'Well, this is just like riding a bike! I know what this is about because I remember it so clearly now! I know what the vibe is!' So in that sense it became rather easy. But the big difference between the two movies is ESCAPE FROM L.A. is a lot more ambitious a film."

Hard to shake, Plissken hitches a ride to excitement in Carpenter's blast from the past. Russell, Carpenter and Hill are hoping to do another sequel.



Carpenter directing the action on the steps of the Hollywood Bowl, a kid with bigger toys to play with.

It's a bigger canvas. It's a bigger adventure."

All three of the principal creators of the original ESCAPE FROM NEW YORK, who subsequently branched out into different areas of filmmaking, saw this sequel as a sort of endearing homecoming. "Our careers have all gone in different directions," said Hill. "We've each been very successful. But there's nothing like coming back. We started together."

"John and Kurt have done five pictures together. They're almost like brothers. There's a great respect between the two of them. If the three of us hadn't gotten together I don't think this movie would have been made. It was never going to be one of us that would have driven it to be made. It had to be the three of us together making decisions, creatively putting forth ideas to get it made. None of us wanted to do it without the others."

Hill added, "There are thoughts that there will be a sequel. We're already talking about it. I hope this goes through the roof. I hope there's a huge following out there of people who loved the picture originally. We have to market it properly to get a new following. If it does well at the boxoffice we're committed to working with each other again and doing a sequel." □

Island of Dr. Moreau

H.G. Wells' eerie tale returns to the big screen—with '90s technology.

By Frederick C. Szabin

If any one classic SF story was tailor-made for treatment by contemporary prosthetic and CGI effects, it would be H.G. Wells' *Island of Dr. Moreau*. Wells' cautionary 1896 tale of the dangers of vivisection—playing like a 19th-century version of genetic engineering—has been filmed twice; in 1932 as *ISLAND OF LOST SOULS*, starring Charles Laughton, and again under the story's original title with Burt Lancaster and Michael York in AIP's 1977 version.

None other than Marlon Brando plays Moreau this time, with Val Kilmer (*BATMAN FOREVER*) as Moreau's assistant Montgomery, David Thewlis (*NAKED*) as the island's visitor and eventual prisoner, Douglas, Fairuza Balk (*THE CRAFT*), as Moreau's daughter and prosthetic veteran Ron Perlman (*BEAUTY AND THE BEAST*) as Sayer of the Law, a beastman role previously played by Bela Lugosi and Richard Basehart. The \$40 million film is set for an August 23rd release.

For this third cinematic adaptation of Wells' tale, New Line Cinema enlisted British director Richard Stanley, who had garnered attention with two previous genre works, *HARDWARE* and *DUST DEVIL*.



David Thewlis as Douglas, the island's visitor and eventual prisoner. Thewlis was brought into the production after the amicable departure of Rob Morrow.

Stanley wrote a script, Stanley Winston Studios was hired to design the beastmen, and Digital Domain, whose work had previously graced such hits as *INTERVIEW WITH THE VAMPIRE* and *APOLLO 13*, was brought in to add some CGI effects. The whole company moved to Australia and things instantly began to fall apart.

"Richard was funny," said Kevin Mack, visual effects supervisor for Digital Domain who was on location in July, 1995. "[Effects producer] Dan Lombardo and I were in Australia to supervise the background plate shooting for the digital effects to be done in California. We had meetings with

Stanley. He would wave his hands in the air; he had some interesting ideas, but he really wanted to approach it haphazardly, kind of wing it in terms of how we would block shots and shoot the plates.

"We were willing to work with him as long as we could," Mack continued, "but it wasn't a very button-down operation. My understanding was that he was fired. They had filmed a few days by then. I was never clear as to why he was fired, but I think it became apparent to the producers and cast that he didn't have his process very well thought out. I think his vision is still there, but I'm sure it's a different film than he

would have made."

Quickly searching for a new director, New Line came upon John Frankenheimer. The veteran director had made such classics as *BIRDMAN OF ALCATRAZ* and *THE MANCHURIAN CANDIDATE*, as well as crowdpleasers like *FRENCH CONNECTION II* and *BLACK SUNDAY*. Taking control of what Stanley had left behind, Frankenheimer closed down production for a week and a half, dismissed Stanley's cameraman, assistant director, editor and eventually the composer; tossed out Stanley's script and footage; and brought in screenwriter Walon Green.

"Walon and I sketched out what we had to do in the first few scenes," said Frankenheimer. "Then we worked on the scenes we had to do according to the schedule, which was based on the availability of actors and things like that. As I took some time to get familiar with the locations, we structured the movie that we wanted to make. Then Walon would write scenes, I would comment on them and we would work on them. The writer I really wanted was Ron Hutchinson, but he wasn't available yet. He had written two of the last three projects I had done. Walon did what he had to do, then he left and I brought in Ron.

"I saw a lot of potential in the

story," Frankenheimer continued. "We went back to the H.G. Wells book, which everybody seemed to have forgotten about in the various attempts to dramatize it. My recollection of the previous films is very vague. I remember that I didn't particularly like them. My movie, from what I understand of the previous films, is quite different. The book is wonderful. It's such a visual subject. The Stan Winston makeups were so good. That's part of the reason I did the movie. I went over to Stan's, looked at these make-ups and thought, 'My God! I could do a lot with this!'"

This wasn't the first time Frankenheimer had taken over a film with no prep time. The same thing occurred on 1964's *THE TRAIN*. With that experience in mind, the director set about dealing with the difficulties of making the best out of another director's sets, locations and casting decisions.

"Australia was chosen as a location because the producer had made other pictures there and had a fairly decent experience," said Frankenheimer. "The terrain was good. I wouldn't have made it in Australia if it had been up to me. I would probably have done it in Georgia or Florida. All of that terrain exists there, or I would have done it in Thailand."

Some sets had already been built, but Frankenheimer changed as much as he could, even moving some sets out of Sydney to northern Australia, and found new locations for water shooting. Only one cast member was replaced. Originally, the role of Douglas was to be played by Rob Morrow, formerly of the CBS series *NORTHERN EXPOSURE* and recently star of *LAST DANCE* with Sharon Stone. Morrow didn't particularly want to be in the film, and Frankenheimer didn't think he was right for the part, so there was an amicable parting of the ways. David Thewlis, who voiced the earthworm in *JAMES AND THE GIANT PEACH* last spring, was



Above: Ron Perlman as Sayer of the Law. Left: Marlon Brando as Dr. Moreau, a part that benefitted greatly from the actor's interpretation.

brought in to handle the role.

As the director struggled to get control of the film's schedule, Digital Domain effects experts Mack and Lombardo found themselves increasingly involved with more elements of production than they thought possible. Mack found himself working with Frankenheimer to design specific shots. Mack noted the director sought his suggestions on composition, blocking and cutting, as well as a little dialogue.

"I was talking with Ron Perlman in Australia," said Mack. "I started talking about my true passions; artificial life, genetic engineering. He got excited and said, 'Geez, they're struggling like crazy because the script-writer's gone and they've got David Thewlis actually trying to write some dialogue for this one scene because the actors refused to read what they had.' It's the scene where Thewlis confronts Moreau, demanding to know what he's doing with all these experiments and monsters."

"They didn't have that part written," Mack continued, "and nobody knew anything about genetic engineering. I had a suitcase full of books on the subject that I studied in my room during off-hours. I guess Brando got wind of that and said, 'You've got this guy right here on the set. Get him to write the dialogue.' I wound up

spending a late evening in David Thewlis' hotel room, giving him a crash course in genetics and genetic engineering, and coming up with a premise of how and why Moreau might be doing what he's doing. In the end, Brando read it and completely reinterpreted it into something much simpler, but I think something of mine got through," Mack laughed.

The legendary actor, according to Mack, was constantly changing the script to suit his own ideas. He would perform dialogue he felt like reading, then the script would have to be rewritten to accommodate what the actor had said.

"Whole story-points were actually changed," said Mack. "But I think the movie is better for it."

"He kept freaking people out," Mack said of Brando. "I was there the first day of shooting when he showed up. He wore a kind of gauzy white robe and white gloves, white boots, a white stocking with a hole cut out over his head, and white face. He also had a really weird oriental hat. Everybody kind of freaked. He said, 'No, this is what I want to wear. This is my costume.' It hadn't been done by the costume people, it was just what he decided was his character. And it's great. It works!"

"And they had this guy, the second smallest man in the

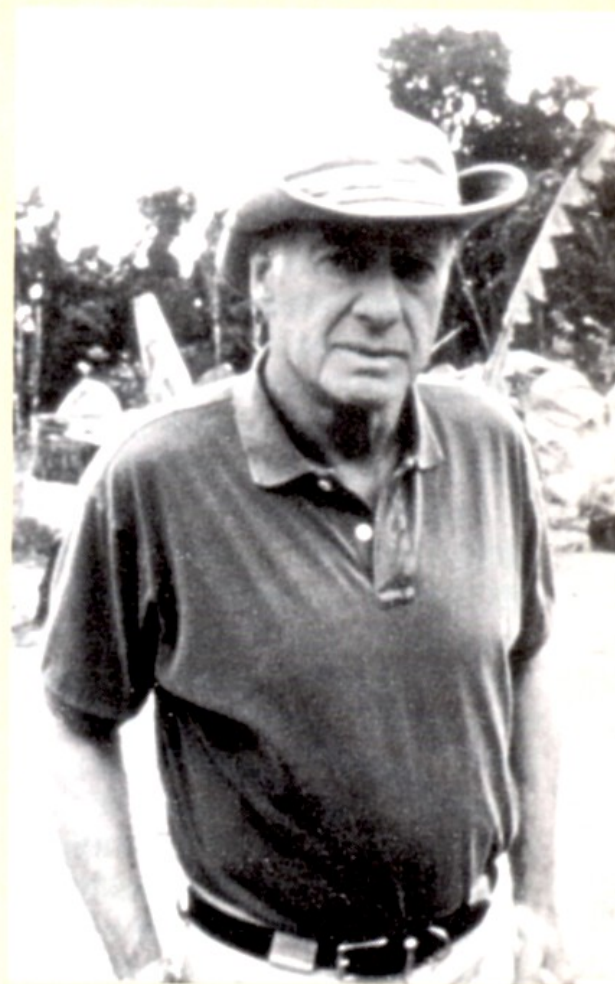
world," Mack continued. "They had gotten him as an extra to wear a costume and be one of the beast people. Brando took a liking to him and decided he wanted him as a kind of sidekick. He's in just about all the scenes with Brando, who even had the costume people make the guy a little costume like his. So you've got this tiny little man—he's 22 inches tall, and his head is no bigger than an orange—in all these shots with Brando. It's wild."

Firmly defending Brando's choices and behavior, Frankenheimer noted, "Marlon Brando is a thinking actor. He is probably the finest motion picture actor of our time. The fact that Marlon Brando had given some thought to his character should not surprise anyone. The point is that every actor shows up with an idea as to how to play his or her part. Marlon Brando did not have the luxury of rehearsal that would be, in most cases, granted to someone."

"His outfit didn't surprise me at all," Frankenheimer continued. "But I don't communicate that to crew members. The point is, Marlon Brando showed up with a conception of how he wanted to play his character, which is absolutely right and that required a certain type of

continued on page 61

John Frankenheimer on-location in Australia—forced to make the best of the previous director's decisions.



THE OSIRIS CHRONICLES

Joe Dante and Caleb Carr bring their non-militaristic vision of space to CBS.

By Dennis Fischer

THE OSIRIS CHRONICLES is a proposed science fiction television series named after the spaceship *Osiris*, which in turn is named after the Egyptian god of death and rebirth. The Paramount series pilot, not yet scheduled for airing, has already undergone its own form of death and rebirth.

According to series creator Caleb Carr, the specific purpose of the series "is to provide a suitable metaphorical setting to talk about things, subjects in the '90s, in a larger and more timeless way, so that they are not issue specific. In other words, it's not the issue of the week, it's what underlies the issue of the week."

Filmmaker Joe Dante, executive producer of the series and director of its pilot, has spent the last several years stranded in development hell as first a version of THE MUMMY, then an attempt at creating an off-the-wall version of THE GREEN HORNET, and then his version of comic strip hero THE PHANTOM all failed to come to fruition. Dante expressed an interest in creating a fresh approach to a continuing space science fiction series and considered creating something similar to Fox Television's SPACE: ABOVE AND BEYOND.

According to Mike Finnell, Dante's long-time line producer, Dante's GREEN HORNET collaborator, novelist and military historian Caleb Carr (author of the best-selling novel *The Alienist*), "literally overheard us talking about this and said, 'I've always wanted to do a space series.'" Carr steered the concept away from a military approach in favor of exploring familial relationships and the possible consequences of the breakdown of the social order of the galaxy. Dante, Carr and Finnell combined to



Marjorie Monaghan portrays Jahna, an exotic beauty of the Zentric warrior race, whose eerie manner is accentuated by vows of silence, in Paramount's non-military sf pilot.

become executive producers of the series.

Noted Carr, "Having been a lifelong STAR TREK fan, I'd always wondered what would happen when the world of the Federation collapsed. What would the galaxy be like when all that finally came to an end?"

"The original idea was to portray that kind of a world. As we got into the '90s, and our world became increasingly fractious and collapsed, it seemed to be a much more propitious time for that kind of metaphor than it had ever been before. I sat down and started working out the details, and pitched it to Paramount, because Paramount is the studio that does successful science fiction shows, and fortunately

they liked it."

Paramount pitched the show to ABC in 1995, according to Finnell, who bought the idea and developed the script with Carr. But ABC passed on the budget as too high. NBC also nibbled but found the show too pricey. A year later, when CBS had undergone a management change, Paramount took the show there.

"They loved it and within record time, they gave it a green light," said Finnell. "Something that we thought was never going to happen all of a sudden was revived. They also wanted it very fast, they wanted it in ten weeks. We all suddenly had to jump in and put it together very quickly."

The scope of the show got scaled down at CBS, according to Dante, to make it affordable.

Noted Dante, "I don't really gravitate towards space shows particularly because it's a lot of hardware and there have been so many of them. It's hard to do anything new. But Caleb is a novelist and he comes from a background of characterization. The appeal to me about this show is that it's a character show, and that everybody's got conflicts and problems. The thing that keeps people coming back to TV shows, I think, is the characters and what's going to happen to them."

Making a comparison to the recent STAR TREK shows, Dante observed, "I think there's a little less of the 'forehead of the week' and a little less of the standard action space stuff, and a little bit more of Caleb's attempt to do what Rod Serling did with the TWILIGHT ZONE, which is to try to use science fiction to comment on what's going on with contemporary issues. I think his pilot script has a lot of that appeal."

Also appealing to Dante was that the show has a non-military milieu. "These



Rod Taylor returns to science fiction as General Lars Sorenson (l) seen here stealing the flagship *Osiris* with co-stars John Corbett as the rogue John Thorpe (r) and Elizabeth Harnois as ace pilot Maggie (c).

people don't answer to a captain, they don't have uniforms, they don't have codes of conduct," he said. "They're all a scruffy, DIRTY DOZEN kind of rag-tag group, and as a result, the character relationships can be a little more interesting and a little less schematized than they are in the kind of shows that we're used to."

Dante, Carr, and Finnell all agreed that their hardest task was finding slightly new angle on tackling television science fiction. "It was important to us to do something very different from STAR TREK," said Finnell. "That was accomplished by Caleb [Carr] in the writing. Putting together the physical aspects of the show in a short amount of time was an undertaking, but when you have solid material, it's a whole lot easier."

The pilot is set in 2420 A.D. and stars former NORTHERN EXPOSURE DJ John Corbett as Justin Thorpe, a space rogue taking care of his kid sister. THE TIME MACHINE's Rod Taylor plays General Lars Sorenson. Said Taylor, "I'm the leader of the old Republican empire that has been the strength of the galaxy, which has faded. He's had this flagship of the fleet, [the *Osiris*] this magnificent kind of aircraft carrier that he's hidden away, and he wants to revive the Republic, now that the whole world has gone to hell and high water with no religion and a bunch of hippies raping and pillaging."

Thorpe and Sorenson have formed an uneasy alliance. Thorpe is a common outlaw, a petty thief. But Sorenson needs him because Justin can steal the money

to refit the *Osiris*, the ship the show is named for. There is animosity between Thorpe, for his part, feels that the Republic wrecked society.

The general's 15-year-old granddaughter Maggie (Elizabeth Harnois) is an ace pilot who has been trained by Sorenson to fly the *Osiris*.

Other characters include an intergalactic arbitrator Rula Korr (Carolyn McCormick), who also happens to be Maggie's estranged mother; Heenoc Xian (John Pyper-Ferguson), a warlord who evolves from a villain to a reluctant and somewhat

Shahklan (Joel Swetow), one of the Engineers—the true villains of the proposed series—who plan to instill order in the galaxy through forced genetic engineering.



“They don’t answer to a captain, they don’t have uniforms, they don’t have codes of conduct. They’re all a scruffy, DIRTY DOZEN kind of rag-tag group.”

—Director Joe Dante—

ambiguous champion of human values; and Shahklan (Joel Swetow), the true villain of the show.

"The bad guys we call the Engineers," said Carr, "a race of beings who decided that the way to end factionalism in the galaxy is to genetically engineer single-sex reproduction. What that does is end interpersonal bonds, which ends the creation of families, which in turn ends the creation of clans and tribes—nations. It's their basic solution to conflict."

"That's really what this show is going to be about. They have to find ways to make all these people live together successfully again. I think that's a problem that people are facing right now."

According to Finnell, the budget for the pilot was high for television, but still well under other shows of this kind. Doing science fiction is always expensive because the filmmakers have to totally create an entirely new world. "You can't go out and buy clothes off the shelf, you have to go out and make clothes," said Finnell. "You can go to exterior locations that are supposed to be planets, but you can't go to rooms. The props, the guns, every single thing that people handle has to be designed and manufactured. That's expensive."

Additionally, audiences conditioned by STAR TREK expect television science fiction to deliver on an effects level. THE OSIRIS CHRONICLES has hired a number of talented people to handle the effects and designing chores, including Bill Millar, the show's visual effects producer, and Steve Johnson, who heads-up the series makeup effects. The show's director of photography is Jamie Anderson, who recently shot WHAT'S LOVE GOT TO DO WITH IT and THE JUROR, and who had shot Dante's first two features, HOLLYWOOD BOULEVARD and PIRANHA before becoming an operator for the great Vittorio Storaro.

"We just wanted a very lower key, moodier kind of look than you're used to seeing on space shows," said Finnell, "so that's what we've done. On the bridge here, there are a lot of pools of light and people in shadows, and it's a little bit different from brightly lit [space shows]." □

EFFECTS

FROM THE

CRYPT

John Van Vliet goes over the top with explosive effects.

By Dan Scapperotti

Exploding vampire hookers aren't just born, they're made. Just ask John Van Vliet, the effects supervisor on *TALES FROM THE CRYPT PRESENTS "BORDELLO OF BLOOD,"* the second in a proposed trilogy of feature length ghastly stories hosted by the Crypt-keeper. Universal opens the sequel August 16.

Director Gilbert Adler tapped Van Vliet to bring his ghoulish visions to life. The effects supervisor began in the business in 1979 doing animation and helped create the now famous laser swords for George Lucas on *THE EMPIRE STRIKES BACK*. Along with partner Catherine Kean, Van Vliet runs Available Light Limited, which is handling many of the effects for the new film. Van Vliet spent a few days in Canada shooting set-ups for his special effects sequences and then headed back to Southern Cali-



Effects supervisor John Van Vliet at his computer. Van Vliet heads Available Light Limited, which handled many of the effects for *BORDELLO OF BLOOD*.

fornia to complete post-production at his facility, located near the Van Nuys Airport.

One of the scenes for which north of the border set-ups were needed involved leads Dennis Miller, Corey Feldman and model-turned-actress Angie Everhart. "When Dennis Miller swings a big battle axe at Angie Everhart, she disappears," said Van Vliet. "We had to set up a split screen for her."

For a scene that became known as their *DEATH BE-*

COMES HER shot, Corey Feldman is severely burned when he's hit with some holy water. "It's very similar to when Goldie Hawn gets a shotgun blast through her in *DEATH BECOMES HER*," said Van Vliet. "We did that by hanging a green screen behind a prosthetic that was built in Canada, then matting in a clean background. With digital compositing it isn't that difficult. The prosthetic is not quite as wonderful as I would have liked, but this is a movie with time and budget restrictions."

Those pesky vampire hookers had to be dispatched in California. "There was a pyro crew that everyone felt much more comfortable with," said Van Vliet. "I think that the prosthetics guys here were a little more attuned to what was going on."

During *BORDELLO OF BLOOD*'s concluding battle scene, Dennis Miller douses the undead hookers with holy water with explosive results. The pyrotechnics were supervised

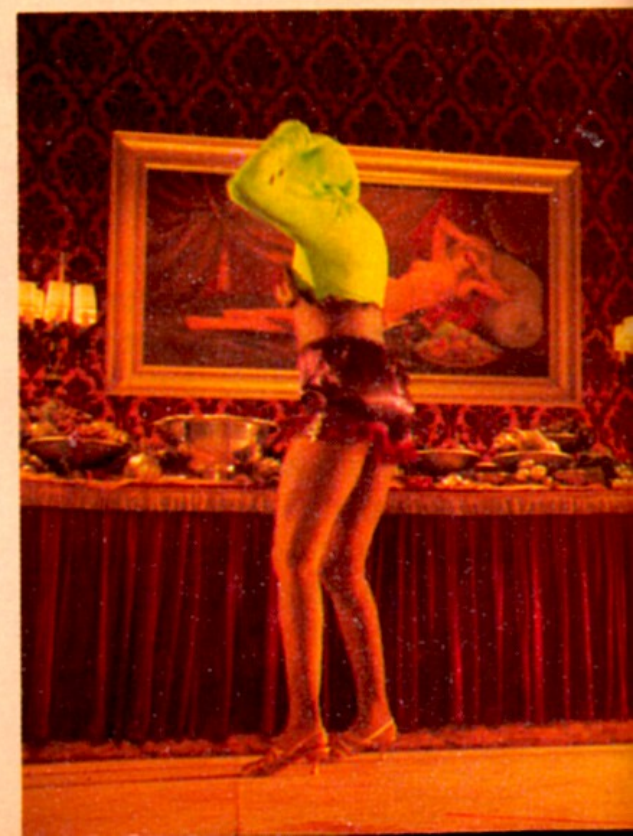


Super-model Angie Everhart as the vampire in *BORDELLO OF BLOOD*, composite by V. Todd Masters Studio. Right: The effects supervisor at work.

in L.A. by Charlie Bellissimo and Tom Belardinelli, who filmed similar sequences for Quentin Tarantino's *FROM DUSK TILL DAWN*.

"We had six exploding hookers," Van Vliet laughed. "It's a non-stop barrel of fun. The only way to get rid of vampire hookers is to explode them. The stunt guy came up with some interesting ideas. Instead of just having people fly through the air, in many cases we have just body parts—the top half of one of the vampires explodes and then later on you see the bot-

Using a green matte suit to film a vampire about to go up in smoke.



EFFECTS DREAM JOB

“We had six exploding hookers. It’s a non-stop barrel of fun,” said effects designer Van Vliet. **“The only way to get rid of vampire hookers is to explode them.”**



vampire queen, Lilith, dispatches a victim in Van Vliet's Available Light Limited, makeup by [unreadable], filmed as green screen composite.



ture,” explained Van Vliet, “and they’re running around eating the population. Just having a wonderful time. Some of the [Canadian] actresses we actually flew down to be used in the destruction scenes. One gal plays the vampire nurse. She goes into the hospital and gets into a fight with Dennis Miller. She’s wearing sun block. That’s why she doesn’t have typical vampire problems with the sunlight. She accidentally rips her uniform so when the light comes through the window she suddenly inflates and explodes all over the room. That was one of the only death scenes that didn’t use holy water.” Todd Masters provided the puppets and prosthetics from a cast of the actress.

“We lined her up on set in position that matches from a video switcher to a prop dummy. We replace her with the prop dummy filled with explosives and goo and guts that flies all over. We jump-cut them and combine them digitally. It looks like she’s actually coming apart. We selectively lose her as the dummy parts fly out. It’s done very tongue-in-cheek. It’s so over-the-top.”

Super-model Angie Everhart who plays the vampire queen, Lilith, was involved with some of the subtle nuances of the effects crew. “We did a couple of things with her that are kind of interesting,” said Van Vliet. “At one point she’s trying to seduce Dennis Miller, getting up-close and personal, saying, ‘Hey, I can be anything you want me to be.’ Her face sort of liquifies and goes from one side of Dennis to the other in this stream of smoke which drifts in front of him and then recomposes on the other side. The nice thing about working on a show like this is

that they let you throw in things like that.”

One day on the set, Van Vliet was sitting with director Gilbert Adler, sketching, when he came up with an idea to enhance Lilith’s weird character. “What if we put an ugly tongue in her,” said Van Vliet. Adler agreed and an interesting scene was born. “She’s got this big mechanical tongue,” said Van Vliet. “She goes for the ultimate French kiss. We had to do one where we had to retract it back in so we did that digitally. We started off with an 18-inch tongue and sort of sucked it in like a frog. This shoot was like a clubhouse atmosphere. Everyone was real open to improvising.

“When you do a show like this, especially when you have a good editor like Steve Lovejoy who understands style, he lets you contribute things that will basically set a tone. All these little things add up and actually create an atmosphere; he’s very cognizant of that fact and let’s us do it.” □

Corey Feldman as a wounded vampire in the film’s comic “DEATH BECOMES HER shot.”



tom half running around. We had stunt people fly off air-ramps and catapults.”

Initially, the producers didn’t see BORDELLO OF BLOOD as an effects-laden film, but suggestions by editor Steve Lovejoy ran up the effects count. “As the film came together, Lovejoy was sort of guiding a lot of things and he’d say it would be really great if things exploded here and there and that’s how we got dragged in a lot deeper than we thought we were going to be.”

The film’s visual effects de-

manded a substantial staff to bring them to life. Van Vliet’s effects crew consisted of about 14 people while pyrotechnicians Bellisimo and Belardinelli had an additional group of eight.

The vampire whores don’t just show up at the end to testify to the effectiveness of blessed water. “You’re introduced to these people early in the pic-

Pyrotechnics by Charlie Bellisimo and Tom Belardinelli were filmed in L.A. in post-production, composite by Van Vliet's Available Light Limited.



BORDELLO

The Crypt-

By Dan Scapperotti

When Bill Gaines started publishing his EC line of horror comics including *Vault of Horror* and *Tales From the Crypt*, he never imagined the controversy that would swirl around his creation nor the lucrative franchise

spun off in other media. So far has the pendulum swung, that the Crypt-Keeper, a target of Senate investigations in the 1950s, has become a children's toy. There have already been 93 episodes of the HBO series. TALES FROM THE CRYPT's second

feature film hosted by the Crypt-Keeper, BORDELLO OF BLOOD, opens August 16, from Universal. The first Crypt movie, DEMON KNIGHT opened to great success in January 1995.



Center: Angie Everhart and Dennis Miller. Left: Everhart tells Miller, "I can be anything you want me to be." Her face liquifies, drifts by him in a stream of smoke and recomposes on the other side, effects by John Van Vliet's Available Light Ltd. Inset: Vampire Everhart. Bottom: Miller destroys vampires with squirt gun filled with holy water.



BLOOD OF BLOOD

Keeper introduces a second feature film.

"We felt that the franchise could handle three films," said Gilbert Adler, who produces the series for HBO and co-wrote, produced and directed the new feature. "When we first went to [Universal] that's what we felt we wanted to do. The television show is very eclectic. One week we could be Gothic, the next week we could be futuristic and then we could be contemporary in any part of the world. That is one of the beauties of the show. We took the same approach with the motion pictures. One time we could be extremely Gothic and do something like *DEMON KNIGHT*. *BORDELLO OF BLOOD* is a little lighter. The third one might be totally different from the first two movies. "Like the television series, we can go in different directions."

In *BORDELLO OF BLOOD* Dennis Miller plays Rafe Guttman, a quirky detective with a missing persons case. He's hired by Katherine Verdoux (Playmate Erika Eleniak) to find her brother, Caleb, played by Corey Feldman, who has disappeared. The trail leads them to Lilith (Angie Everhart), a blood-thirsty vampire queen who runs a brothel of sexy ghouls, and the wacked-out Reverend Current, played by Chris Sarandon (*FRIGHT NIGHT*). The good reverend has decided to wipe out lust by bringing Lilith back to life and putting her in charge of the deadly bordello where sin can be harshly dealt with. Locating her 500-year-old resting place, Current resurrects Lilith but quickly loses control of the undead goddess.

Not only does Adler produce the new film, he also directs. "I wanted to direct something that was very different from the first movie," he explained, "and yet



TALES FROM THE CRYPT producer Gil Adler with the Crypt-Keeper. Adler co-wrote, produced and directed *BORDELLO OF BLOOD*.

very much within *TALES FROM THE CRYPT*. We came up with *BORDELLO OF BLOOD*. That was filmed in Vancouver last summer."

Adler produced as well as directed the movie, which was filmed in Vancouver last summer. He liked the idea of setting the Church/Bordello smack-dab in suburbia. "I think it's funny," he said. "I think it's scary and I think it's very sexy."

Adler sought to pack the film with state-of-the-art special effects, and hired John Van Vliet of Available Light Ltd., to supervise (see story page 32). "Once you get into digital and on-camera special effects nobody does it quite like the people in Los Angeles," said Adler. "We did the physical effects in Canada and we did the digital effects in Los Angeles. Whenever you come out with a picture with digital effects you want them to be something you've never seen before or hasn't been seen before in some twisted way. And I think we've accomplished that. I think

you'll be very surprised and wowed-over. Some of them will bring a wry smile to your face and maybe even a chuckle.

"*TALES FROM THE CRYPT* has always been known for good storytelling and good special effects," said Adler. "We always felt, even with the television show, that if we can't do it really well then we don't want to do it at all. So I didn't want to do effects that were just okay. I wanted to do effects that were great. And I think we accomplished that. Of course those effects always take time, especially if you want to do them well."

A fiery shot was probably the most difficult to confront the effects team in post-production. "It was a repair shot we did," said Van Vliet. "There was one shot that they did up in Canada that was supposed to be the aftermath of the big bordello fight. Everything is supposed to be just piles of smoldering vampire meat burning away. For whatever reason the stuff never amounted to anything but a 12-inch sterno

flame. I think there were some limitations on what they were allowed to shoot with the fire up in Canada. So we went in and did a lot of pyro burns against black and then we picked up the flames and dropped them in the scene. It's one of those shots no one will know is a process shot. It's pretty seamless. They were going to drop the shot. It was one of the things I had to plead for. I told them I really wanted to do the shot and show what we could do."

In a surprise move, Universal pulled *BORDELLO OF BLOOD* from its initial release slated last January when it was scheduled to go up against the similar-themed *FROM DUSK TILL DAWN*. Adler put a different slant on the change in release dates. "I was flying back and forth between London and Los Angeles and we were doing some sneak previews, as most movies do," he said. "The rating cards came out very, very high. People loved the fact that they thought it was very funny. They loved Dennis Miller and they thought Chris Sarandon was terrific. I got a call in London from the partners and someone at Universal saying they thought this should be a summer movie. So we pushed it back from January to August so that it comes out in the summer. That sort of makes it the movie to see before you go back to school."

Being a triple-threat, directing, producing and writing *BORDELLO OF BLOOD*, didn't phase Adler, who confronts each aspect of his multiple career as separate entities. "They're very separate and different functions," he said. "For example, writing, which I do with Alan Katz, is very introspective. It's almost like therapy. You sort of leave the real world for five or six hours a day when you

TALES FROM THE CRYPT

THE HBO SERIES

Looking for a new edge, the series travels to London for season seven.

By Dan Scapperotti

Producer Gilbert Adler has filmed seven seasons of TALES FROM THE CRYPT for HBO. Adler, a native of Yonkers, New York, was at one time a music writer for SESAME STREET. Later he produced plays in New York, Edinburgh and London. One of his plays, *Bullshot Crummond*, a slapstick sendup of the old Bulldog Drummond detective yarns, was sold to Handmade Films. Adler's credentials were impressive when he was approached to take over the production reins on TALES FROM THE CRYPT. Adler had written, directed and produced FREDDY'S NIGHTMARES as a TV series for New Line, and had garnered ACE Awards for HBO with shows like THE HITCHHIKER and VIETNAM WAR STORIES.

"When the partners [Richard Donner, Giler, David Hill, Joel Silver and writer Bob Zemeckis] were looking to bring someone else in, HBO introduced us and the rest is history," said Adler. "We basically select the comic books, but since the comic books were written in the '50s there's not much meat on the bones. They're really of a sensibility that is foreign to, and not as sophisticated, as the sensibility of the '90s. We'll glean



Looking grave indeed, Julie Cox appears in "Last Respects," a new episode on the most-watched show on cable's HBO.

a character or relationship, a story, something that we can use and basically throw everything else out. We'll reconstruct and build a whole new story that's applicable to today's youth market."

Adler is involved in selecting what comic books to adapt, formatting the story and assigning writers to work up the script or, in some cases, writing them himself. With a plethora of stories to choose from, Adler's challenge is to pick the right tale. "We look for something that will be interesting to the audience and compelling," he said, "yet very twisted with a lot

of turns. Something that has some ironic humor to it. I think our show is different because of that. I think most copycat show-shave failed because they don't consider the ironic twisted humor that we have on our show. We'll look for that and really good storytelling."

With the dawning of each new season, Adler and his staff try to give the show a new edge. For their just-completed seventh season, Adler headed for England. "We shot the entire season in London," the producer said. "We'd done about 80 shows and we felt that if we took it to England we could take advantage of the Gothic nature of the architecture there, which would be very appropriate for our show. We have often wanted and made offers to English and European talent to come over and be in the show. But since we only have five days to shoot an episode, by the time someone flies over and gets used to the jet lag, it's time for them to go back. We thought that if we were right in their backyard we would probably have an easier time attracting them to be in the show. It worked out very well because we were able to attract talent that we wouldn't be able to get here, and we were able to go to

go to write and then you come back and deal with your own problems like writing the checks for the rent and the phone bill. With producing, you're dealing with people and it's much more outgoing than the writing process. The directing process, again you're dealing with people, but you're sort of dealing with people and the script. It's convincing and conveying to people what is the idea and the subtext of the situation and characters. It's getting the best input that you can from them and incorporating their skills, their techniques and the things they have to bring to the part so that all those things appear on the screen. I enjoy all three."

As with most directors, Adler's must deal with time restraints. "Every time I direct, whether it's a five-day episode on TALES FROM THE CRYPT or a big feature like BORDELLO OF BLOOD, the biggest problem is always time. You can always use more time. So you just have to keep moving very rapidly. For me, one good thing about shooting TALES was that I learned how to shoot quickly. It's always good to be nimble on your feet and be able to adjust either the script, the action or the camera to accommodate the time and money you have."

Up next for Adler is a new weekly science fiction show for HBO, PERVERSIONS OF SCIENCE, filming this summer. □

Post-production repair work with pyrotechnics and optical composites saved the film's smoldering climax.



“Most copycat shows have failed because they don’t consider the ironic, twisted humor that we have on our show. We’ll look for that and really good storytelling.”



Tennis, anyone? The Crypt-Keeper relocated to London, England for the recently completed season. Right: With Adler on the set.



places that we wouldn’t shoot or couldn’t conceivably build in the States.”

The production spent six weeks in preproduction and then 13 weeks of filming with a final week and a half to wrap. It wasn’t an easy schedule for Adler, who spent much of the time flying between London and Los Angeles where he was finishing and test-screening the second feature, *BORDELLO OF BLOOD*.

“We tried to give the ironic humor an English twist,” Adler said, “and an English flavor and expose our audience to places they may never go to or have never seen. For example, for ‘Escape’ we took Dover Castle and made it into an English prison camp for German soldiers in World War Two, and we shot in the snow.”

For “A Fatal Caper,” a tale of revenge and murder directed by Bob Hoskins, the unit took over a stunning mansion known as the Nebworth House. “That was a wonderful location,” said Adler. “The exteriors, the library and all the rooms were better than we could ever build. We certainly couldn’t find facilities in Los Angeles or California that were like those. It’s a whole new look, a whole different flavor that our audience experiences but keeps it within the mold of *Tales From the Crypt*, which is ironic, dark, Gothic.

Good storytelling.”

The Crypt-Keeper set the proper British tone for the first episode of the new season, talking about being in jolly old England and London. “We wanted to let people know that the entire season was shot in London and not just the first episode,” said Adler. “That the Crypt-Keeper decided to go to London and take the show with him.”

One location used in “A Slight Case of Murder,” a sly look at a murderous scheme, really intrigued Adler. It was a castle built in the 1500s that still houses the original family. The property had been handed down from father to son through the centuries, a testament to the history that embraces the new shows.

The Americans from sunny California had to brave the harsh English winter but it didn’t seem to bother the locals.

Noted Adler, “The castle where we shot ‘A Fatal Caper’ was about an hour outside of London. That was just fantastic, but it was freezing cold. One of the things that you don’t see when you’re looking at the show is what it was feeling like when you’re shooting. The inside of that place was bitter cold. It was snowing outside. When they do the shot where the father dies and they’re carrying the casket outside it was so cold that I insisted that Bob Hoskins wear a jacket. But

Hoskins said, ‘I’m English. I don’t need a jacket. You need a jacket.’ I said, ‘You need a hat. You don’t have any hair. Wear a hat.’ We went and shot in November, December and January which is the heart of the winter there.”

A complaint voiced by many fans of the show has been that the level of violence has been toned-down on the program. And they’re right, but the suspicion that it was a result of selling rebroadcasting rights to the Fox Network may not be the full story.

“Yes, the violence has been toned down,” confirmed the producer. “The sensibility of society is such that we don’t think our show survives specifically only because of the gore or only because of the violence. Good storytelling and building good characters that you want to spend time with is always the basis of whether these shows are successful or not. We just felt that we didn’t have to have as much violence or strong language. We brought it down just a little bit.”

But looking at the premiere episode, the new season seemed to have gone back to a cable sensibility. “We wanted to give everybody a little touch of what to expect the rest of the season,” said Adler. “Some of them have more nudity, some of them have stronger language, some of them have a bit more violence. We’re trying to do the best storytelling we can.”

Always looking for new directions for the Crypt-Keeper to take, the last episode of the season, “The Third Pig”—a hilarious twist on “The Three Little Pigs” saga—will, appropriately, be animated.

“We were trying to expand the horizon of the franchise,” said Adler about the inclusion of an animated tale. “We just wondered what would it be like

if we did an adult animation show and would our audience like it—would that expand the franchise? So we decided to try one and see if it works. The Crypt-Keeper is not animated.”

The animation was done by Nelvana, a Toronto company with offices in Los Angeles. Bill Cobb directed the show, which was shot in Toronto.

Adler is proud of the show’s success on cable. “We’re the number-one watched show on HBO,” he said, “and we have been for as long as we’ve been on the air.” Whether the show will be back for an eighth season is still undecided. “Each season everyone figures people have seen enough of this,” said Adler. “But I like to believe, because of the storytelling and the different things that we do with the Crypt-Keeper, the attendance doesn’t diminish. We try to build and expand what he’s capable of doing and the way we portray him, so that people get a chuckle and get great satisfaction at seeing the Crypt-Keeper.” □

Frenzied, knife-wielding Roger Ashton-Griffiths in “Report from the Grave”—a return to more violence?



SOLO

Mario Van Peebles portrays a cyborg killer who goes rogue rather than kill innocents.

By Sean Strebini & Steve Biodrowski

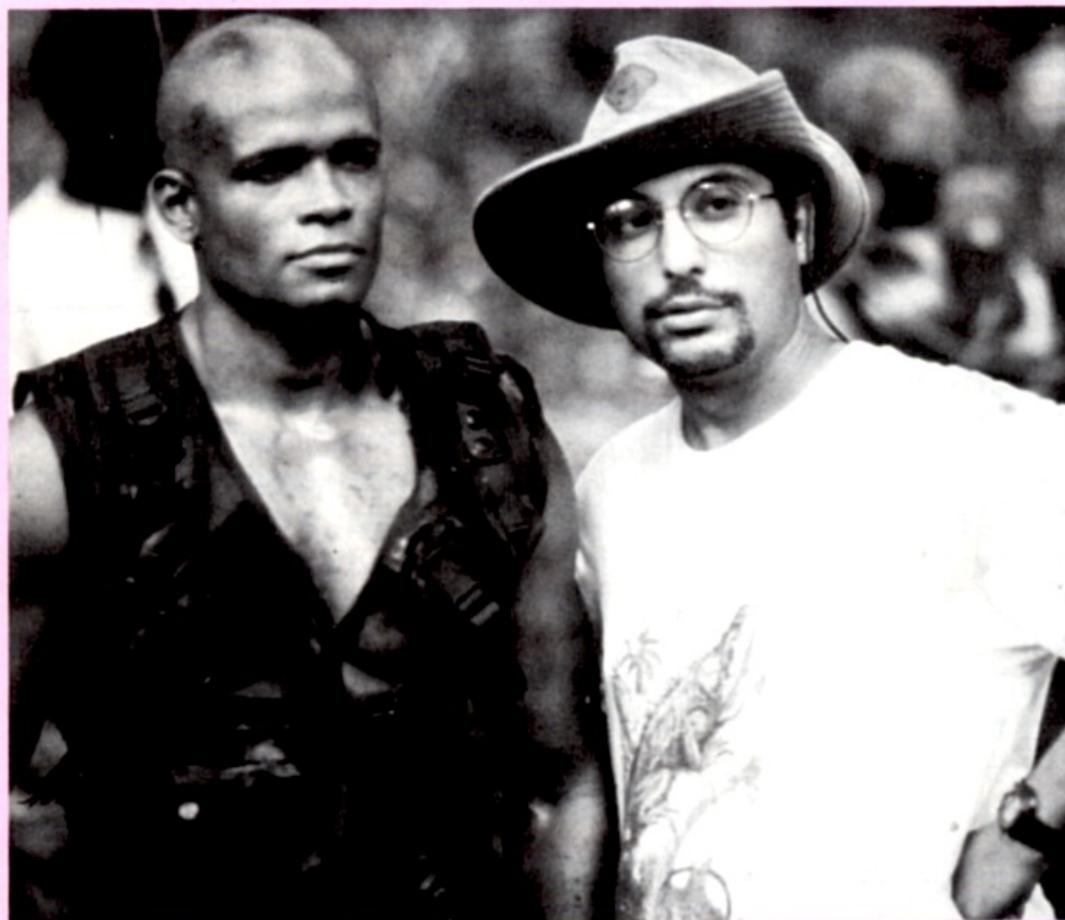
Solo is the best covert warrior money can buy, made not of flesh and blood but of plastics and fluids. He can carry out the government's most dangerous top-secret operations anywhere in the world and be repaired on-site. The Solo prototype is the simulation of a man, wired not only with extraordinary fighting skills but also with the ability to think and learn. He is the ultimate assassin—until his maturing intellect begins to conflict with his having been programmed to kill.

Mario Van Peebles (most recently seen in *HIGHLANDER 3*) stars as the cyborg killing-machine. William Sadler (*DEMON KNIGHT*) is Colonel Madden, sent by the army to track down the renegade robot after it refuses an order to kill. Abraham J. Verduzco (*DESPERADO*) and Seidy Lopez (*MI VIDA LOCA*) are a brother and sister who befriend Solo when he seeks refuge in their South American village.

The film was produced by John Flock (*FORTRESS*) and Joseph N. Cohen (*IRON EAGLE IV*), and directed by Norberto Barba (*VANISHING SON*). Special effects were handled by Buzz Effects.

Triumph, a division of Sony devoted to low-budget science-fiction, will release the film on August 23, pushed back from a previously announced April opening.

Van Peebles, who was looking for a complex character to



Mario Van Peebles, as Solo, on location in Mexico with director Norberto Barba, who brings his U.S. Army Reserve Special Forces expertise to the film.

play after directing *PANTHERS*, was attracted to the role because he was interested in how the script portrayed the plight of indigenous people under the threat of superior technology.

Noted Van Peebles, "When the Westerners came to Hawaii, they said, 'Man is in the image of God, and anyone who looks less like God than we do—we'll subjugate, and they'll work for us. You can chop down a forest and make a log cabin as long as you pray; you can mine the hills as long as you serve penance.' So you had the first ecologically unsound religion, where for the first time you were shitting where you eat. The effects of that have sometimes been disastrous."

When Solo refuses an order that would kill innocent peo-

ple, he is damaged and takes refuge in such a third world society—the antithesis of everything his programming has taught him. "He has so much to learn from them, as do we now," said Van Peebles.

The character presented a challenge for the actor, who had to be unsympathetic, apparently unstoppable, and at the same time vulnerable, while playing a cyborg assassin. "Part of it is how you move," said the actor. "I'm fairly agile and do some martial arts, boxing, and gymnastics. That all helps. We wanted this character to be very fluid, not like a Robocop kind of guy. He could damn near pass for human, but he's still got certain qualities—something different about him.

"I think you believe the strength factor," Van Peebles continued. "It was very liberating, actually. We live with so many rules and regulations—you've got to get your check cashed; you've got to please your boss; you don't want to catch the wrong disease. There are so many *can't's* and *don't's*. When you're a cyborg, you don't worry about that kind of stuff. You just step over that. You don't worry about cold; [when playing Solo] I found that I didn't get cold. What you play, you become, at some level. I just finished another picture and I had more accidents and scrapes on that than I did on this one where I was hanging from a chopper, going through fire, all those kind of things."

With a character who is invulnerable, generating suspense can be a problem. "You have to define the rules in these movies," said Van Peebles. "You have to know what Superman can do: he can't see through lead, and Kryptonite is a real pain in the ass. Once you define those rules, then you try to make things work within that framework. Your ability to do that has a lot to do with how good the film's going to be. If you can create a reality and stick to it, it's great, especially if people act with any kind of logic. That's very important in this kind of film. I believe they did that."

Having just come off his directing stint on *PANTHERS*, Van Peebles wasn't interested in stepping behind the camera when he read the script for



William ("Why do I always play the bad guy?") Sadler is Colonel Madden who leads the elite military unit's hunt to destroy the renegade killing machine, Solo.

VAN PEEBLES ON PLAYING SOLO

"We wanted this character to be very fluid, not like a Robocop kind of guy. He could damn near pass for human but he's still got certain qualities—something different about him."

But they can't place him—they just know they've seen him before. So here comes this well-dressed American with shades and these bags, and they don't even know why he's so scary—but they *know* the son-of-a-bitch is up to no good! I said, 'Bill, I don't want to travel with you!'"

SOLO was shot entirely in Puerto Vallarta. Van Peebles described the experience as "a vacation—people *pay* to go there!" But since they couldn't fall back on studio shooting in Hollywood, the filmmakers had to capture everything on location. "It's all there," said Van Peebles. "You'll see it's really me hanging from the chopper and going through the fire. I think it makes a difference if you really see the person involved in it. It gives you a different connection with the character. And it's an excuse for me, a big kid, to hang from a chopper at 200 feet!"

Of course, a lead actor can only get away with so much before the insurance company steps in. "That was a question that came up," admitted Van Peebles. "You try to take the proper safety measures, and I didn't get hurt on the film." The actor worked closely with his personal trainer, Chris Michaels, and with stunt coor-

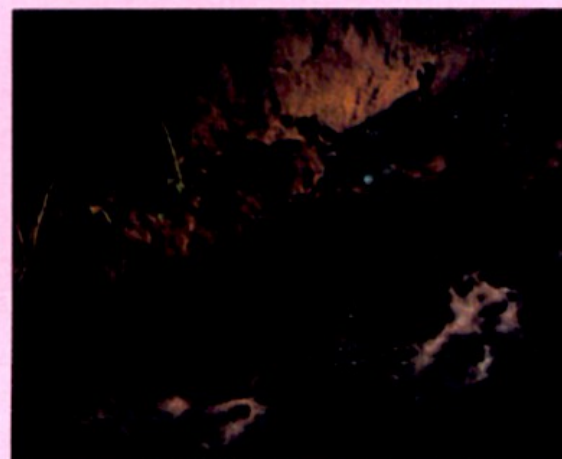
dinator Tom Muzila. "We did one stunt, where we were shooting a pickup shot in Mexico. I had the stunt guy do it first, and I'm glad I did! I had to slide down this wire with one hand while holding a wounded man over my shoulder. Supporting your body weight from one arm is a tricky thing, but with another human being it is another thing entirely. We had a pulley rig supporting me, and it was set up to maintain the speed. However, when we put the other guy over my shoulder, the speed suddenly doubled—which they hadn't calculated! And then the height was different, because there was more weight, which drew the wire down. We're coming down this major cliff, like 300 feet, and the last part of it was over rocks—except suddenly we were *in* the rocks!"

With experiences like that, Van Peebles ranked SOLO as his most demanding role to date. "It was probably the most demanding physically that I've done, although HIGHLANDER 3 was right up there," he said. "Christopher Lambert's vision is not so good without the glasses. So when he takes the glasses off and he's aiming with his sword, if he sees three Marios, he goes for the one in the center! You've got to be ready!" □

SOLO. "It's nice to let someone else do the hard work, and I can figure out what time to call my agent!" he laughed, then added, "I had a big part in picking the director. The biggest part of that decision is picking someone you're ultimately going to trust. Other than that, being a backseat driver in a job like that is just too much—you're just going to annoy the guy."

Another concern was finding the right actor to play Madden—someone who would be a convincing threat as Solo's nemesis. "These things are sometimes like a tennis match, in that both sides have to be even, so the villain's got to be strong to make it work," said Van Peebles of co-star William Sadler. "Bill is great, with a very natural intensity. He's a

good guy, but he definitely has a wiry, amped-up intensity, and he's pretty convincing. It's funny to talk to Bill. He asks, 'Why do I always play the bad guy?' Bill and I were going through the airport in Mexico. Bill came off the plane with sunglasses on and went out to the parking lot, where he was surrounded by Federales at gunpoint. Why? Because they've seen him in a movie, no doubt as a bad guy.



Below: Solo's cliff climbing made easy. Inset: Visual effects by Cinesite enhance the feeling of danger, composite supervised by Brad Kuehn.



HYPERNAUT

Launching ABC Saturdays into a universe

By Dan Persons

They're enough to make the more enterprising amongst us start up bidding wars for those valuable star-chart concessions: all those lost spacecraft clogging the galaxy, each trying, in their own special way, to make like Paul McCartney and get back to where they once belonged. STAR TREK: VOYAGER was first out of the gate, now the junior league has checked-in, with Nickelodeon unleashing the CLARISSA-EXPLAINS-THE-GALAXY-like Billy Mummy/Peter David collaboration, SPACE CASES, and ABC going for more honest action-adventure with HYPERNAUTS. While CLARISSA may take the prize for boomer references (Liverpudlian aliens?), it's ABC's effort, launched this past March by many of the same people who gave us BABYLON 5, that may yet set the hearts of the Heinleinian purists aflutter.

The story is HOMEWARD BOUND as retuned for Saturday morning: a trio of bickering space cadets—Ace (Glenn Herman), Sharkey (Marc Brandon

Working on a dream come true, Ron Thornton has created his homage to THUNDERBIRDS and STINGRAY.



THE HYPERNAUTS' mech suits were designed with laws of physics in mind, so they could seemingly lift one leg without falling over, as well as kick alien butt.

Daniel), and female member Max (Heidi Lucas)—get assigned the simple task of cleaning up a bit of space junk, and instead find themselves and their spaceship, the *Flapjack*, warped across the universe and into the midst of the Triiad, a world-stripping race for whom the Earth sounds like a tasty *hors d'oeuvre*. Aided by the maternal, if somewhat skeptical alien, Kulai (a cool-headed Carrie Dobro—think Neelix with a much-appreciated personality transplant) and pursued by Kulai's vengeful associate, Triiad leader Paiyin (an over-acting Ron Campbell—think

Neelix minus the impulse to grovel), it's up to the teens to make their way home without pointing the way for the Triiad armada, even as they attempt to deal with the myriad races they encounter on the trip back (including one bunch whose sum concept of warfare is restricted to the delivery of really biting insults—can we convince Howard Stern to emigrate?).

For his first foray into all-out production, executive producer and Foundation Imaging co-founder Ron Thornton said the choice of THE HYPERNAUTS was an easy one: "The reason I went for the concept was that I

had looked at Saturday morning, and it had gotten really bland. Most of the stuff that's on is recycled Japanese stock footage, or just plain cartoons. There was nothing that had real heart to it, that was like the things that I grew up on—THE THUNDERBIRDS, FIREBIRD XL-5, and some of the live-action shows as well—DOCTOR WHO and things like that. It was inspired a bit by that; I did want it to have that kind of sense of wonder that you get from the STAR WARS trilogy, which I think are really nice because they don't talk down to kids. That was basically what I wanted to do, the specifics of it came later. It came out thinking: what cool stuff would I like to see?"

The British-born Thornton—who developed THE HYPERNAUTS in conjunction with Christy Marx, supervising producer John Copeland, and co-executive producer Douglas Netter (all of BABYLON 5 fame)—is no stranger to cool stuff, having himself been responsible for props and miniatures on DR. WHO, BLAKES 7 and TRIPODS, before moving on to the groundbreaking CGI effects work for B5. (As for the Supermarionation factor, is it mere coincidence that the invocation that kicks off every HYPERNAUTS episode, "Stand by to launch into a universe of action and adventure," has more than a few echoes of STINGRAY's "Stand by for action"?)

With Foundation having long-ago grown beyond its Amiga-based origins to a become a full-fledged effects facility—with the Pentiums and DEC Alphas to prove it—Thornton claimed the company is quite ready to take on the challenges of THE HYPER-

S

of action.

NAUTS: "It was easier, mainly because we've been doing *BABYLON 5* for three years, now. We've learned a lot; it's a continuous learning experience. Throughout the course of the seasons we've been able to get progressively better and better; a lot of the short-cuts that we didn't know about, we now know. We were able to bring them to bear on *HYPERNAUTS* and try to design our way into doing it for a Saturday morning budget.

"We try not to do a bunch of the things that are [done] on *BABYLON 5*. The main thing is that there's so much in terms of effects, that you have to have a great deal of cooperation and communication with the crew on the [live-action] floor. That doesn't really happen on *BABYLON 5*, but on *HYPERNAUTS* we have to make it happen. If we've got bad plates, or somebody decided to do camera moves, it would kill us in terms of schedule. So it's just keeping the lines of communication very, very open. It helps a lot."

For Thornton, this meant a hands-on approach that saw him on the studio floor most shooting days. "I was there all the



Above: The *Hypernauts* mechsuit on a jumpsled launching from the *Star Ranger VII*. Bottom Left: Glenn Herman as Ace, Heidi Lucas as Max, Marc Brandon Daniel as Sharkey with Sgt. Needham (Tim Colceri). Bottom Right: Herman, Lucas, and Daniel with Carrie Dobro as their alien mentor, Kulai.



EYE CANDY

Feature-quality effects on a television budget.

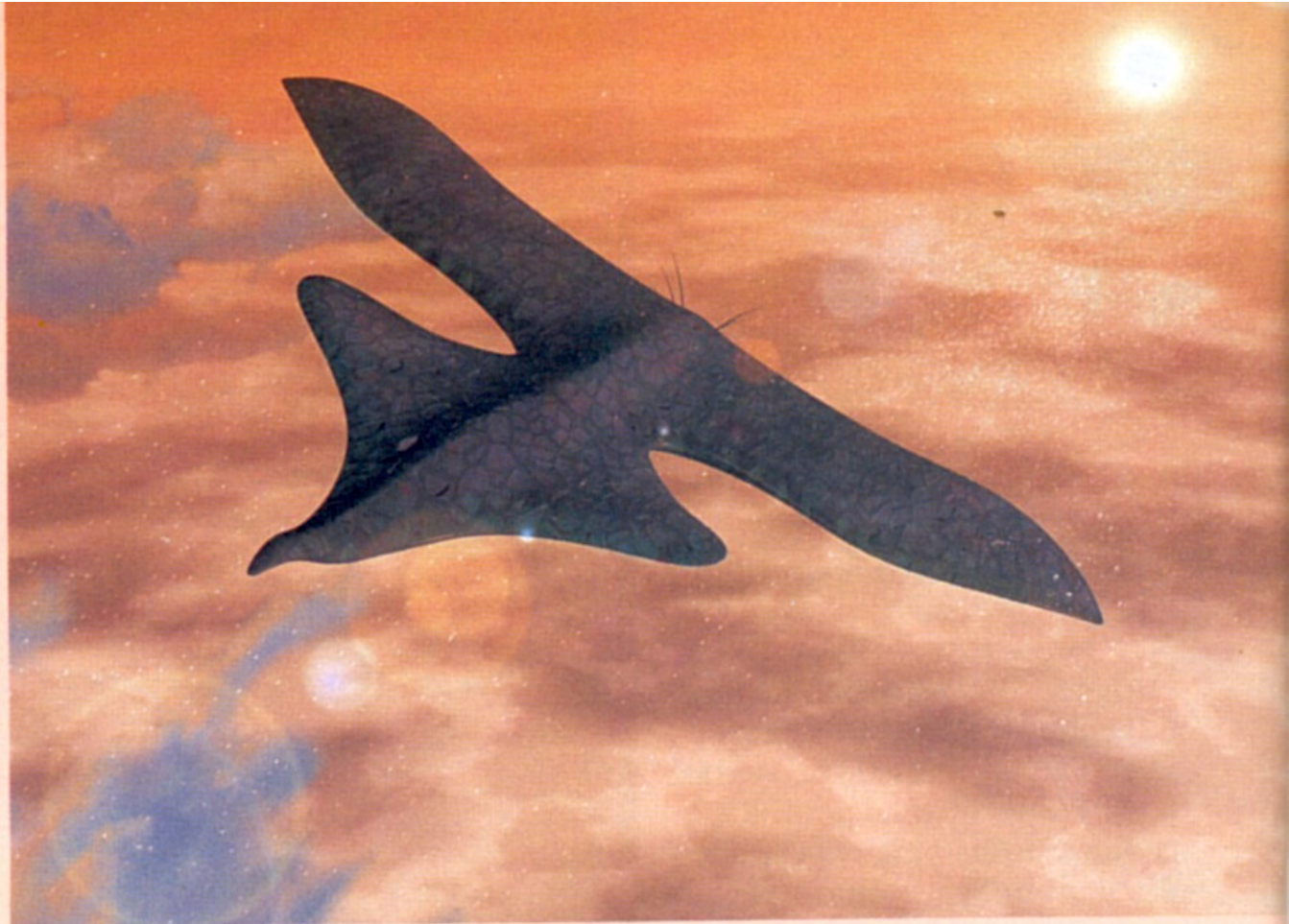
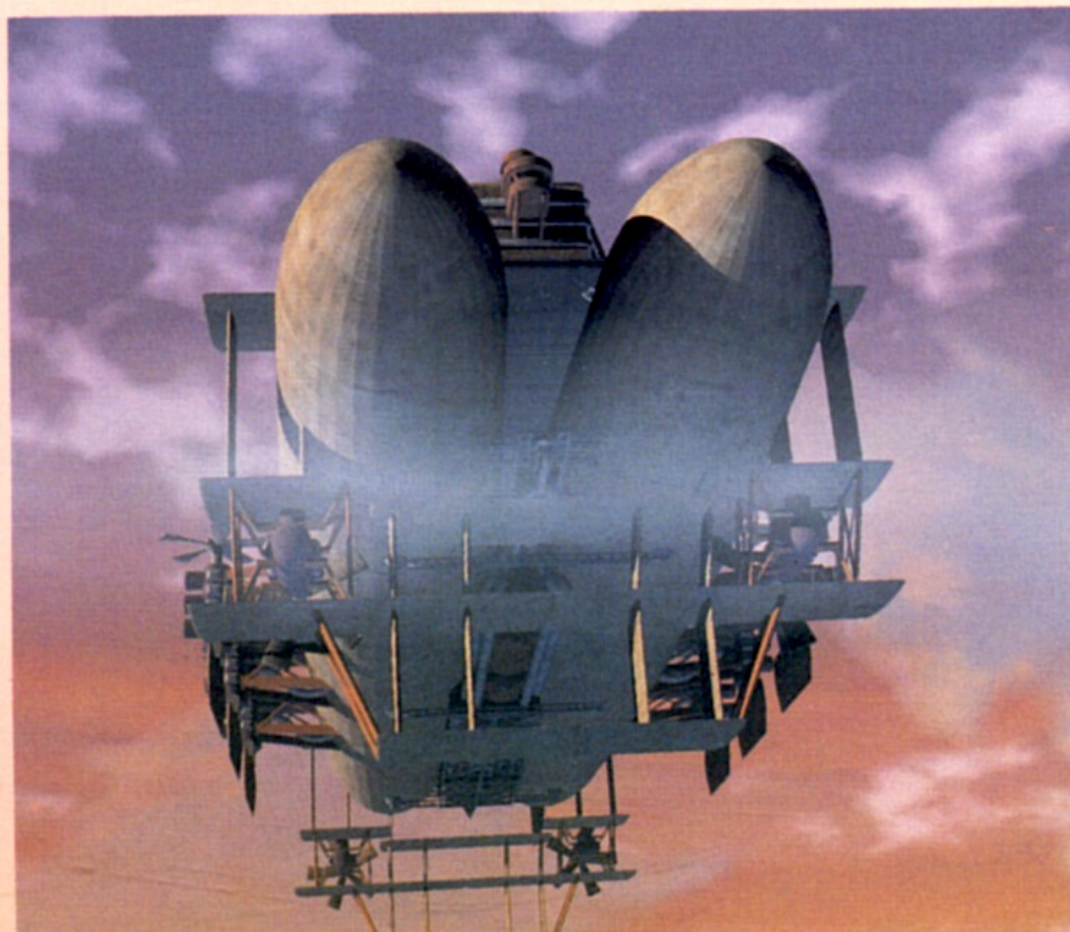
By Dan Persons

There are two ways you can go when you're doing a kid-oriented science-fiction show on a limited budget: 1) bite the bullet and hunker down for a half-hour of chat-fests enlivened by the occasional stock-shot fly-by (i.e. your basic SPACE CASES episode) or 2) risk professional suicide and personal sanity by trying to deliver feature-quality concepts for *SAVED BY THE BELL* bucks. One look at "Cloudhome," a half-hour-long installment of ABC's *HYPERNAUTS*, is proof positive that the latter route is not beyond the aptitudes of the truly dedicated. Boasting, just for starters, herds of airborne aliens and a mass congregation of giant airships, it's the kind of vision that would make less-hardy souls seek more comfy positions on the staff of *REGIS AND KATHIE LEE*.

If anything, the scenario of "Cloudhome" was fair warning of the difficulties that lay ahead. Attempting to warn a society of cloud-dwellers of the imminent arrival of the world-devouring Triiad, the crew of the *Flapjack* stumbles upon the process by which the aliens obtain the gas that keeps their air-ships afloat: the harvesting of herds of docile, flying mantas. It's an intolerable situation for Max, who suspects that the mantas are actually sentient beings and who, in her attempts to stop the carnage, threatens to antagonize the very people the Hypernauts are trying to save.

Already a complex enough concept for ten o'clock on a Saturday morning, "Cloudhome" upped the stakes by demanding several elaborate effects set-pieces: a sequence in which the *Flapjack* intercedes in an airship's pursuit of a manta; a fly-over tour of the once-ravaged planet's surface, now overgrown with lush foliage; and a finale in which a mass congregation of flying mantas use their stealth-shielded skins to conceal the presence of the airships from the approaching Triiad. Just one of these sequences would, in the past, have been enough to launch a special-effects supervisor at the throat of an unsuspecting producer. To put all three into a single episode was to court the gods of disaster.

The mass airship scene from "Cloudhome," brought to life by Foundation Imaging, was intended as a tribute to anime director Hayao Miyazaki.



The flying mantas appear in three sequences for the "Cloudhome" episode—a very tall order before today's CGI technology and no-less impressive on *HYPERNAUTS*' budget.

According to executive producer Ron Thornton, everyone involved in "Cloudhome" entered into the project with their eyes wide open: "It was something that I had thought out in advance, so I knew that we'd be able to do it. When we went through with the script, the first outline came through and my partner came to me and said, 'How the hell are we going to do this?' I told him, 'Oh, no problem,' while thinking in the back of my head, *How the hell are we going to do this?* Dan DiDio of ABC TV then turned around and said, 'I've got just one thing to say to you, Ron: good luck!' [Laughs] But there are ways to do these things, there really are, and it's just being resourceful and trying to work out how to make things

work for you."

Helping to make things work was, of course, Thornton's access to the CGI facilities of Foundation Imaging. "With CG," he said, "you don't have to worry about it. Your only limitation is the amount of memory you have. The major problem was making sure that all the mantas didn't flap at the same time; that was going in and doing a little bit of editing for the moves. It wasn't that tough; really not that difficult, because you're doing it all in one pass. If you were shooting it motion-control, it would be a nightmare, absolute nightmare. Luckily enough, it's the wonderful world of CG."

While the congregation of airships (an image that Thornton acknowledges was intended as tribute to anime director and flying-machine enthusiast Hayao Miyazaki (*THE CASTLE OF CAGLIOSTRO*)) may not have inordinately inconvenienced Foundation's CGI staff, the fly-over of the planet's surface, during a sequence meant to demonstrate the manta's intelligence, was another story. "That was pretty tough," said Thornton, "because it was very, very heavy on computing time; just getting that look to it."

The demands incurred during the "Cloudhome" shoot were extracted in myriad ways: the effects sequences—which represent over one-half of the episode's 20-minute running time—took three and a half

continued on page 61

time. There were very few days when I wasn't there, because we'd be doing something with effects just about every day. I made sure I was available to answer the questions of the director and help them if there was something in particular they wanted to do."

The result is a show that might have, in its 20-minute running time (deducting opening and closing credits), up to ten minutes of special effects per episode—a ratio that would have caused giggling fits in producers a mere decade ago. Helping to make this seemingly insurmountable task fall a little more within the realm of possibility has been the participation of such top-line talent as production designer Steve Burg.

"I've known Steve Burg for a long time," Thornton notes. "We've done a few collaborative things on *BABYLON 5*, where he and I developed designs for the *Starfury*, originally, and he also designed all of the characters in *B5*. He's worked so much on big movies—he'd just come off *WATERWORLD* and was doing *TERMINATOR 2 3D*—and I asked him if he'd come over to *HYPERNAUTS* and work with us. He took a very substantial pay cut, and he was a little bit nervous at first, but by the time we got into it he just had a blast. We would just sit here every day, and he would sketch something and I'd start to build it in the computer and he'd modify it and I'd modify the computer version. It was really, really cool; it was a great experience getting to design it just so."

That precision in the design phase turned out to be a crucial factor for Thornton, who insisted on a verisimilitude that would suffuse the *HYPERNAUTS* universe. For the mech-suits—those ambulatory, human-piloted cyborgs that the 'nauts use for everything from routine maintenance to hand-to-hand (pincer-to-pincer?) combat—the producer's requirement was that the machinery maintain some kissing acquaintance with the laws of physics. "We definitely wanted everything to look like it could work," said Thornton. "There are some mech things that I've seen, be they videogames or on

“The ABC viewership is more used to watching things like *FUDGE*,” said Thornton. “When *HYPERNAUTS* came on, it was a little bit of a shock at first...”



In episode #9 of the ABC series, Max meets "The Maker," a planet-sized manufacturing plant for the evil Triad machinery.

TV, where—for example—you might have a two-legged mech, but its legs are so far apart that if it lifted one foot off the ground it would just fall over; there's no possible way it could stand up. So part of this was developing the walk cycle so that the thing's center of gravity was always under its feet or it had enough momentum to keep itself balanced. That's the type of thing we really tried to keep in mind: the workability of the designs. And in a way, that pays off, because you don't think about it. You look at it and say, 'Yeah, that could work.' Therefore you're not quite so critical."

The production's attempt to composite the young actors into their CGI environment—while maintaining a modicum of style—has been more complex. Though limited budget and time demands have precluded the use of motion control, Thornton noted that the tilts and pans that, for instance, might show a space cadet emerging from the ship's hatch into a CGI sky filled with winged aliens are not completely beyond the production's capabilities: "We haven't had the chance to do [motion control]. We do something

that's kind of a cheap version of it, which actually works extremely well. We shoot actors against a blue screen, but we shoot with very long lenses from a very long way away, so that there's no perspective going on in their general hand movements and things like that. Then we take them, and put them into 3D scenes, kind of like if you cut out a photograph and stuck it in a model. We do nice crane-up shots and things like that, and it really helps."

As for the live-action component, Thornton—who made his directorial debut on *THE HYPERNAUTS* episode 'The Dark So Deep'—concedes that he only became fully aware of the difficulties filming on a limited-budget when he himself assumed the helm. "It's like you always say, 'Oh, yeah, yeah; I can direct, I can do this.' You don't realize how tough some of this stuff is until you're right there, and it's like 'Oh, okay. So the *Star Ranger*'s set is kind of a bit small, isn't it?' You don't realize it until you're in there and trying to get camera angles and it's like 'Jesus, you can barely move in here.' We've already made ten episodes and I'm only just realizing this!"

ABC's reputation as a network where entertainment frequently placed second to the projection of positive role-models initially took some of the steam out of *HYPERNAUTS*' momentum. "The ABC viewership is more used to watching things like *FUDGE*," said Thornton.

"When *HYPERNAUTS* came on, it was a little bit of a shock at first; they were not used to it. For the first few episodes it effected the ratings detrimentally. But it's really starting to pick up now, which is great."

The recovery was apparently strong enough that, while at the time of writing the network hadn't officially greenlighted a second season, money was ceded to fund the scripting and pre-production on eight new episodes. While the production must now find another facility to shoot its live-action footage (it lost the converted, Santa Clarita warehouse that had served as production base to a firm involved in theme park attractions), work is continuing on new wrinkles for the second season.

"In terms of their hardware," said Thornton, "the mech-suits are going to be added to continuously. There are additional weapon systems that are going to be put on them. The actual head-part of each mech-suit removes and can be put into different types of vehicles. They started with just the legs, and they also have a thing called a jump-sled, which is like a small maneuvering pod, but it has a small hyper-drive on it. The next one that they get is going to be the surface-skimmer."

As for plot-lines, already on the boards is a visit to an eco-nightmare world where automated building machines have run amok, penning a dwindling society into a five-mile square patch of greenery. And for those viewers who have noted *Kulai*'s occasionally smug regard of her bickering charges, a genetic weapon will turn the tables on the alien, zapping her with human DNA and turning her into the Momma from Hell. "By the time it gets to the end of the episode," noted Thornton, "it's just degenerated into *AMERICAN GLADIATORS*."

Thornton and Burg are already at work on another series,

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LOCH NESS

Ted Danson stars in a romantic comedy about the legendary Scottish creature.

By Alan Jones

The importance and value of myths in our lives is explored in *LOCH NESS*, a \$10 million romantic comedy-fantasy in which the legendary Scottish monster resurfaces to change the life of Dr. Jonathan Dempsey (Ted Danson), a brilliant American zoologist who has gambled his reputation once too often on the "authenticity" of Bigfoot and the Yeti. Sent to disprove the existence of the Loch Ness monster as a last chance punishment for destroying his academic credibility, Dempsey falls for landlady Laura McFetridge (Joely Richardson, Vanessa Redgrave's daughter) as he assembles the super hi-tech scanning equipment which will answer the centuries-old mystery once and for all. Or will it? Gramercy Pictures is scheduled to open the film September 20.

Produced by Tim Bevan (Richardson's husband) and Eric Fellner, the team behind the British hit *FOUR WEDDINGS AND A FUNERAL*, the film also stars Ian Holm (*BRAZIL*), Keith Allen (*SHALLOW GRAVE*) and eight-year-old Glaswegian newcomer Kirsty Graham, the Working Title production features the latest in computer graphic effects, plus an under-wraps contribution by John Stephenson, the creative supervisor of Jim Henson's Creature Shop. Making his feature film debut with "a monster movie about hope," is John Henderson, one of Britain's most popular television comedy directors, more recently known for his award-winning BBC adaptation of the children's story *THE BORROWERS*. The critical success of that Working Title serial was the main reason why producers Rellner and Bevan actively searched out a movie project for Henderson.

"Filmmaking is about making you laugh,



John Henderson, making the jump from British TV to the big screen, directs Ted Danson in the \$10 million Working Title production of *LOCH NESS*.

and jump," Henderson said. "*LOCH NESS* does all three. The moment I read the script I said, 'Who do I have to kill for it?' I couldn't have asked for a better screenplay to kick off my feature career."

The script had been lying around for nearly ten years. "It was the first script John Fusco ever wrote," explained Henderson. "His second was *CROSSROADS* [a blues-based road movie] directed by Walter Hill in 1986. John was still in college when he wrote *LOCH NESS*. He stayed in Scotland for five months one year and got totally carried away by the myth and some fireside tales his Scottish grandmother told him. It's John's autobiography in many ways. The finished script lurched around for a while. Fox had it and decided Americans wouldn't be interested in such a Scottish story. Roger Spottiswood [*TERROR TRAIN*] was going to direct it, then Tom Mankiewicz [*DRAGNET*]. I got excited by the romantic angle and wanted it accented more, which is what John and I did when we rewrote it together."

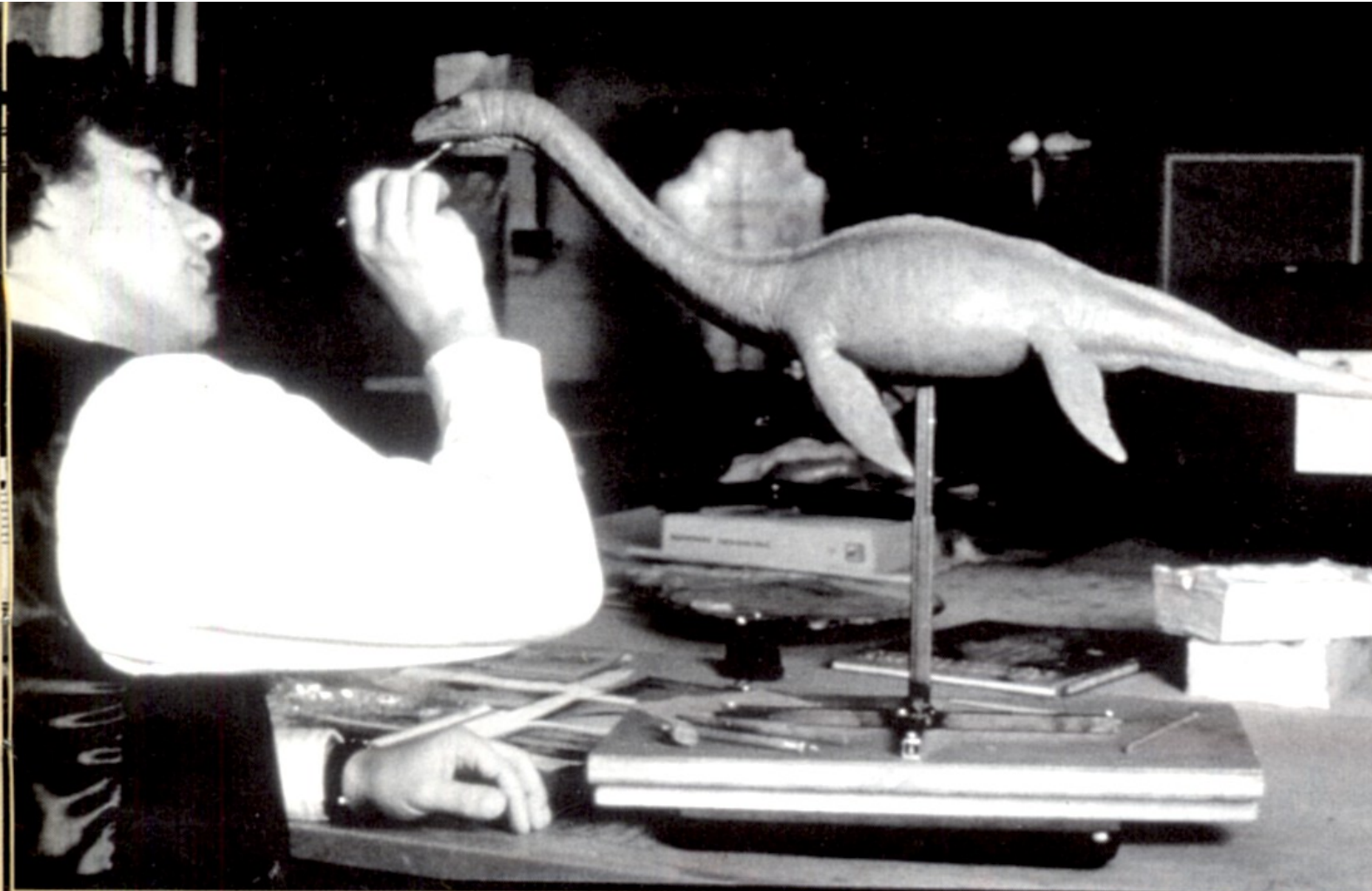
Though movies featuring the Loch Ness monster have been surprisingly few and far between—*THE SECRET OF THE LOCH*

(1932), *WHAT A WHOPPER!* (1961), *THE PRIVATE LIFE OF SHERLOCK HOLMES* (1970), *THE LOCH NESS HORROR* (1982)—the legend still holds tremendous allure—it is Scotland's major tourist attraction. The first recorded sighting of the "water kelpie," as locals refer to it, dates from A.D. 565 and is credited to St. Columba (of whom Kirsty Graham plays a vague reincarnation as Isabel McFetridge, Laura's magically empowered daughter). The most famous photograph of the creature was snapped by Colonel R. K. Wilson on April 19, 1934, and the most widely used documentary footage was the four-minute

cine-film taken by Tim Dinsdale on April 23, 1960. Since that time, over 10,000 people have sworn to seeing a monster, but no one to this day can offer conclusive proof.

Henderson thinks he knows why. "There's a line in the script that sums it up: Dempsey says, 'There are no creatures, no UFOs in the sky, and there's nothing hairy wandering around the wilds of North Columbia. It's just a wish list to make us feel there's more to life than the shit we got stuck with.' You see, what we've got isn't enough," Henderson added. "People in general always want more, something to make their lives worth living. That's the fascination. In preparing this movie, I spoke to people who claim to have seen Nessie. And when you've been told by a Mother Superior about what she saw, someone who has no reason to tell you anything but the truth, it's hard not to believe the stories."

Henderson has studied all the scientific data, too, and concluded, "There's no doubt in my mind there is something of an unexplainable nature living in the loch. Now, whether or not it's the classic idea of a crea-



An artist at the Jim Henson Creature Shop touches up the model of the monster, resembling a plesiosaur.

ture, is a whole different ball game. Did you know in the last year the Natural History Museum in London has discovered a gap in the Loch Ness food chain? Something is taking the fish out. It could be anything, but..."

Henderson has even seen the real monster himself—well, two inexplicable bumps in the water, near the shore, which quickly disappeared. The sighting happened during location shooting on the actual loch in late Fall, 1994. He remarked, "It's such a creepy place to film. There's more water in Loch Ness than in every other lake in Britain put together. It's 26 miles long and 1,000 feet deep, and that's a lot of places for something to hide. There's so much peat in the water, you can see very little below the pitch black surface. What could swim below 100 feet and then rise quickly without its internal organs bursting under pressure? Who knows? The loch can be mirror smooth one moment and then gale-force six the next. We lost a boat and a generator by misunderstanding the sudden odd changes in weather. It's not the most beautiful loch by any means, but there is a majesty to it. There are more accidents on the coast road than anywhere else in Scotland because drivers are always staring out of car windows. It's such an extraordinary place."

Filming was actually interrupted one day by a crazed Frenchman jumping into the loch to be baptized by the monster, an event which neatly sums up the exact tone Henderson is striving for in his eccentric, heightened-reality fantasy. "Despite the look and style being very real, I tend to describe LOCH NESS as 'GROUNDHOG DAY meets LOCAL HERO,' to put across the clever humor. The story is so strong that there's no need for flash direction on my part. I'm going by the Billy Wilder school of

thought: record the action and don't let the camera get in the way. There's one image in LOCH NESS which is the key to my approach: a piper in a kilt stands at the end of a jetty, starts to play the bagpipes, and the BEVERLY HILLBILLIES theme wafts over the glen. It's an obvious cliché turned upside-down. The reason why people describe the monster differently each time is because they have no frame of reference for it, and that's what life is all about."

Henderson asked Ted Danson to play his stranger in a strange land because he "wanted someone vulnerable who could cry, someone who could deliver a flip comic line and break your heart while doing so. Ted is not your average vain Hollywood star and was willing to take a risk. I also believed he'd be the sort of person who would be seduced by Scotland and get caught up in the atmosphere of the place."

Danson had numerous reasons for tackling the LOCH NESS challenge. "My

Isabel (newcomer Kirsty Graham) reveals a secret locale to the skeptical Dr. Jonathan Dempsey (Danson) as he searches for the creature in the loch.



“The feel-good factor is high, and the characters are lovable, so I think it will be successful. Not every picture has a 1400 year teaser campaign!”

—Director John Henderson—

grandparents were Scottish," said the Golden Globe and Emmy Award winner. "I loved the romantic quality of the script. The cast was fabulous, and John Henderson is one of the brightest directors I've come across. However, the main reason for making LOCH NESS was because of the sentiments behind it. The whole point is Dempsey doesn't want to find anything in the loch. But that's the worst thing that could happen to the local community because the monster is their industry. Yet if he does prove conclusively that the monster exists, the whole place would be ruined and turned into a Nessie-type Disneyland. It's far better for everyone just to believe it's there, and I thought the metaphor was wonderful."

Danson finds romance with Joely Richardson in LOCH NESS, but does he really find the monster? That's a secret, though hardly a well-kept one, considering the title. "We can't call it that and not show a monster, can we?" confided Henderson.

Also, a subterranean cave "with the magic in it" was constructed at Pinewood Studio. The director pointed out, "I'm using film grammar to trick the audience. It's straight-forward stuff, but now perhaps is the time to fool people with more simple methods. You know, when ILM read the script they said, 'Hey, you don't need us because it's the story that's strong. We're not important.' I'm using sleight-of-hand, making the audience think I'm going to do something when I really intend to do the exact opposite instead."

Henderson doesn't feel any pressure to deliver the same box office rewards as Working Title's previous success. "Funnily enough FOUR WEDDINGS AND A FUNERAL and LOCH NESS were being developed at the same time, and it was the latter they thought would be big," said Henderson. "Then FOUR WEDDINGS snuck out, and it's taken the pressure off of me, actually. The attitude was, 'Oh, it's a hit, so now let's get on with this.' It's been a relatively smooth ride ever since. The feel-good factor is high, and the characters are loveable, so I think it will be a success. I mean, it's not every picture that can say they've had a 1,400 year teaser campaign running!" □

DRAGON HEART

By James
Van Hise

Plans to produce the movie DRAGONHEART were in active stages long before director Rob Cohen signed on. Until he had a major motion picture to his credit, Cohen had to stand silently by while his business partner, John Badham, was first offered the project.

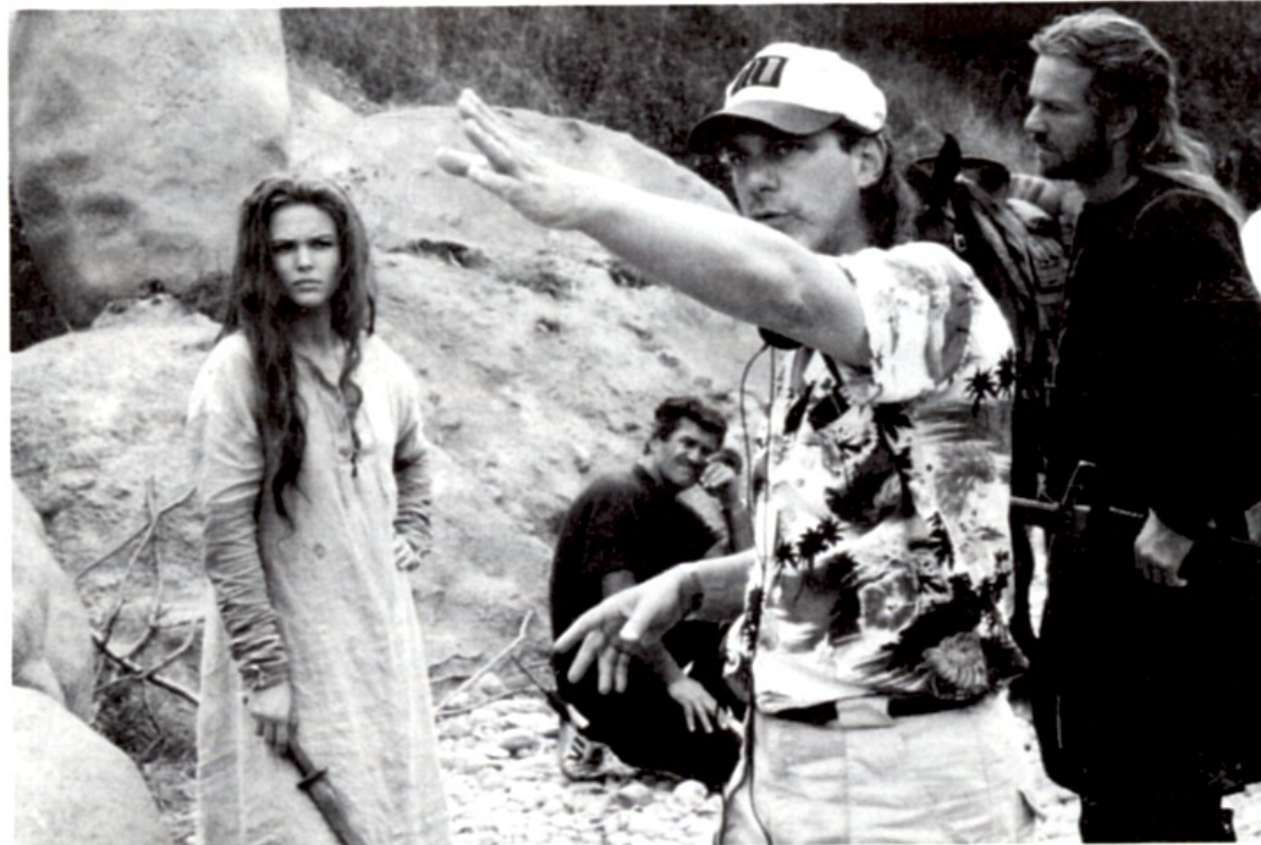
But when Cohen read the screenplay, he took an immediate liking to it; Badham, on the other hand, couldn't develop any enthusiasm for the story of a knight and a talking dragon. In the meantime, Cohen went on to direct the very successful DRAGON: THE BRUCE LEE STORY for producer Raphaella de Laurentiis, who wanted him to take on DRAGONHEART.

But Cohen was passed over again; this time Universal opted for director Richard Donner.

However, when Donner eventually bowed out, De Laurentiis again put forward Cohen as director. "She went to the studio and laid down the law," recalled Cohen. "She said, 'I want to go with Rob or give me the movie back and I want to move it to another studio.'" That was in December 1993 and Universal decided to move forward on the project with Cohen.

The director said he had only one choice of who would give voice to the dragon, first, last and always. "There was only one thought for Draco, ever, and that was Connery," said Cohen. "If I have to go wherever he is and beg him, I gotta get Sean Connery because everything about this dragon had an overlay

After being passed over twice, director Rob Cohen brings his vision to life.



Rob Cohen directs Dina Meyer and Dennis Quaid as Bowen on location in Slovakia. The European setting was chosen for a well-preserved, 10th-century castle Cohen saw in a book.

to the dignity and the humor and the power and the irascibility and all the stuff that Connery so aptly represents through his 40 years of films. I sent him the script and spoke to him on the phone. He called back and said, 'Yes, I quite like this. I'd be honored to be in this film. I like myth. I rather fancy myself as a dragon, you know?'"

Then it was up to Cohen to overcome the same obstacles which had stymied Richard Donner—finding a lead actor the studio would approve. While Universal would have preferred a major actor with the proven ability to open a film,

like Mel Gibson or Sylvester Stallone, not even Donner had been able to interest any superstars in a film where the co-star was a special effect.

Noted Cohen, "A lot of male stars had been reluctant to be in the film because they did not want to play against the dragon that wouldn't be there. And then there was Sean Connery, who might be an upstager, who never even had to show up and do the hard work of making the film."

Dennis Quaid agreed to meet with Cohen to discuss the film. "Dennis Quaid was somebody I'd admired, but the studio was demanding other people to try to

carry what was promising to be a significant budget," said Cohen. "Dennis is very charming, very bright, and a fine actor. One of the things I realized was that Dennis had done INNERSPACE and ENEMY MINE, and therefore was going to be very, very used to the rhythms of special effects, which are slower for the actor than a normal film."

Universal agreed after it became clear to them that no superstar would take the risk of being upstaged by a special effect, as well as deal with all of the inherent difficulties involved in shooting such a picture. The next stage involved doing extensive storyboards of the dragon scenes prior to recording Draco the dragon's dialogue with Connery.

"We laid out a program of pre-recording before the film so that I had something to work with," said Cohen. "But my biggest problem then was to storyboard, time, budget and number the amount of dragon shots it was going to take to tell

the story. One actor can say a line and take 6 seconds, another actor will take 12 seconds, and when you're paying \$16,000 a second [to ILM], it makes a big difference in the budget. When I had the storyboards, we all met in Nassau near Sean's home and recorded the first session of the script with Sean playing Draco and Dennis playing Bowen and me playing everything else. That was really a remarkable two days."

The recording session with Connery was vital when it came to doing the location filming in Slovakia where Den-

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DRAGON EFFECTS

Bowen (Dennis Quaid) develops a friendship with Draco (voice of Sean Connery), brought to life by ILM and Phil Tippett, who designed the dragon.

By James Van Hise

Just as JURASSIC PARK was a breakthrough film in the field of Computer Generated Imaging, it laid the groundwork for the next step—creating a CGI character like DRAGONHEART's Draco the dragon. Draco talks and is called upon to give a nuanced performance, making him a CGI image to be reckoned with.

This image began with the design of the dragon. While Industrial Light & Magic did the actual CGI work on Draco, the original likeness of the character was created by Phil Tippett at his own company, the Tippett Studio in Berkeley. Tippett had worked with ILM many times in the past and even helped it get set up after it relocated to the San Francisco bay area from Los Angeles. Tippett's work on films dates back to STAR WARS and includes other major efforts like DRAGONSLAYER, ROBOCOP and JURASSIC PARK.

Tippett worked out the dragon designs—with sculptor Peter Koenig and the initial ILM supervisor, the late Steve Price—based on several meetings with DRAGONHEART director Rob Cohen. Noted Tippett, "I knew Rob could begin to see

Phil Tippett and ILM, together again, take CGI to a new level.

the character that he wanted emerge and would give us more direction and focus towards a lot of the detail on the structure of this character, which he wanted very much like an old Samurai warrior that had been around for a long time. So we tried, in the details, to indicate a lot of aging—

make it seem as though it had some kind of a history."

Tippett also worked closely with Cohen in preproduction to develop computerized storyboard animation of his Draco scenes. Said Tippett, "We built a computer graphic version of Draco, Bowen and the Scribe

and then, based on the production design blueprints and layouts, built scenes, sets and computer graphic models. Then we placed these characters into the shots, built the sequences and camera angles, and tried to begin to get some kind of an idea how one would begin to block the action so that there would be some kind of a blueprint Rob [Cohen] could have out on location, to either deviate from or use as a guide."

Designs for the dragon were refined in a series of maquettes, leading to a final design maquette, about 18 or 20 inches long. Once approved, the final design dragon—which was about five feet long—was sculpted, incorporating an incredible amount of detail. ILM used Tippett's model as a basis for their computer graphic model.

Tippett made the model large enough for use as a lighting reference on the live-action set. "You want something that's pretty good size, that has a lot of detail," he said. "The most fun of any production is the pre-production stage where you're doing all of this stuff; the hard part is what ILM was doing—actually generating all the shots and all the work. So it's an enviable position we were in.

Phil Tippett and Peter Konig with design maquettes. The final model was over five feet long and incredibly detailed, eventually forming the basis for ILM's CG model.



We're looking forward to seeing all the hard work that ILM has generated."

When Tippett's five-foot model was delivered to ILM, they scanned the model into the computer as a template for the CGI model builders to work with. The CGI for DRAGONHEART at ILM was spearheaded by visual effects supervisor Scott Squires. ILM became involved on the project in May of 1994, after most of the storyboarding and dragon design had been done. Squires became involved at this point and had to travel to Slovakia to be on the set during filming of the live action.

"I was there from the middle of June until the end of November," said Squires. "They had so many dragon shots that I was working with the director and the director of photography in terms of laying out the shots and discussing the best set-ups. We also had to have a team there to take measurements of the locations, so that when we came back here to ILM to put the dragon into the scene we would know exactly where things were in the real world and how they related to that image on film."

Squires wrote a program for his Apple Powerbook to store



SCOTT SQUIRES, ILM EFFECTS

"We're not expecting to replace an actor any time soon, but in certain cases...if you want to reproduce or recreate somebody who's not here now, then that is an option."



Character animation supervisor James Strauss works on Draco at ILM. The 22 minutes of CGI took a year to complete once the live action footage was shot.

the data transmitted electronically from scene marks—usually balls on sticks, topped with prism units. Noted Squires, "Once we got that back here we just basically put those numbers into the systems and the match-movers, then tracked that information frame-by-frame.

"We used some other kind of target that we could see in the actual image. In some cases it was out at 2.35 since we shot in VistaVision, so we could keep things below frame. We'd measure those, and when they put that number into the computer

back here, they'd create a 3-D model, and know that it matches. If they overlay that image on the computer with the actual scanned-in image, they can see them line up. On a moving shot we would leave in the markers so that they could track them and view the results as they were going through with the match-move programs here. This gave them a 3-D reference in space for all the locations."

The 22 minutes of CGI in DRAGONHEART took an entire year to complete once the live action footage had been

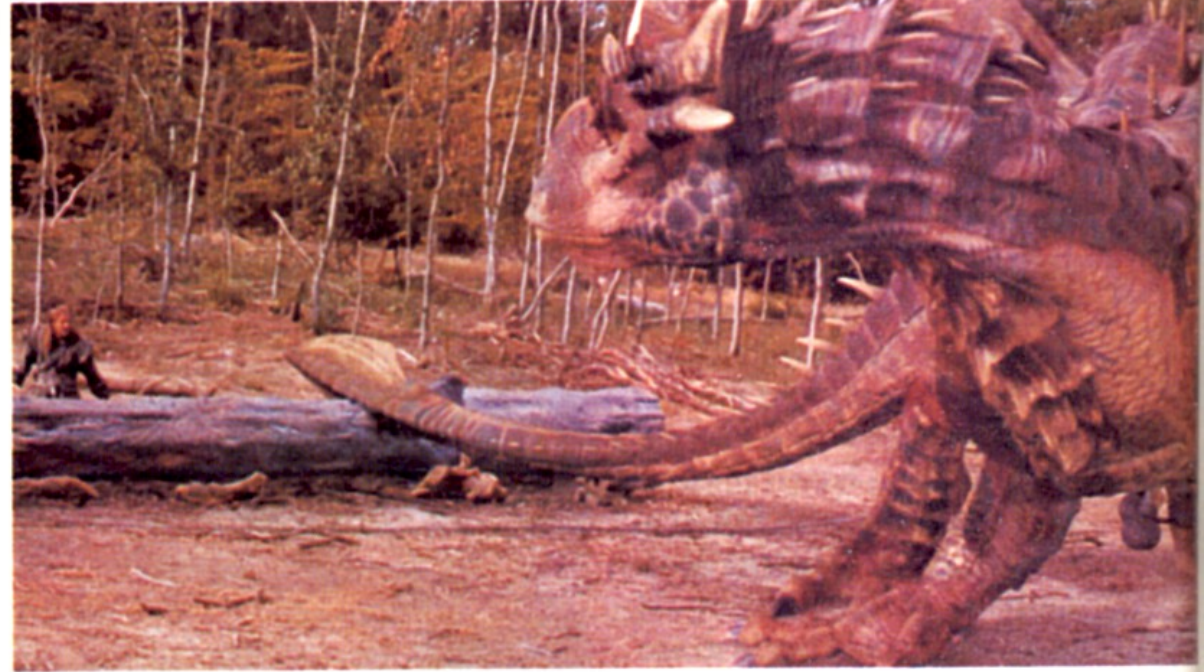
edited into a final cut by director Rob Cohen.

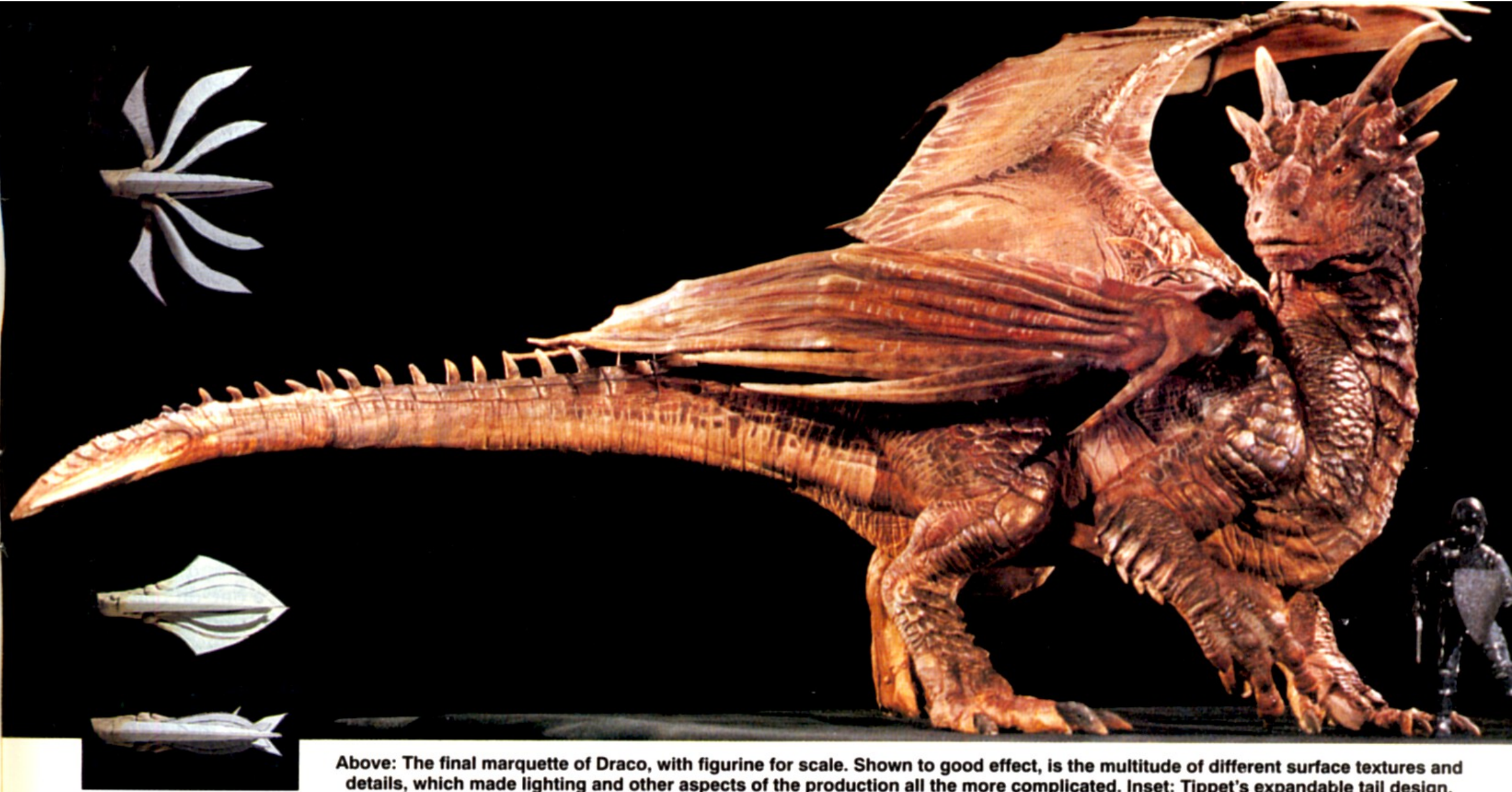
ILM's scan of the Draco model was keyed to an animation skeleton with different pivot points. This enabled the animators to set up key frames. They are able to pose and advance Draco through the scene, setting up key frames, leaving the computer to generate all the in-between frames. They use the camera move or camera placement already provided by ILM's match-mover system.

ILM spent several months constructing and detailing Draco in the computer. Actual animation began on April 1, 1995. "The animators got right into it, and they could produce an animated take that same day or same night of a shot," said Squires. "Depending upon the amount of processors available, the number of shots going on, you either render each shot overnight in plastic [an undetailed image] or you may go ahead and do a render of it which has the textures and the paint on the dragon. The typical shot might take a month or a couple months to do, and in some cases a few months for the animator to get everything working correctly and the technical director to get it lit, and the look and balance within the background plate working correctly."

Squires noted that the work of DRAGONHEART was "several times more complicated than anything in JURASSIC PARK, because within the dragon character we have soft skin areas, scales, callouses, horns and spikes. Each of those has different lighting characteristics

Top Left: Detail showing Tippett's tail design in action as Draco unveils his weaponry to Bowen. Below Left and Right: Draco and Bowen (Dennis Quaid) face-off in battle, only to later become allies in overthrowing an evil king.





Above: The final marquette of Draco, with figurine for scale. Shown to good effect, is the multitude of different surface textures and details, which made lighting and other aspects of the production all the more complicated. Inset: Tippet's expandable tail design.

and is painted in a slightly different way. "And then for his face they built an incredible amount of detail, both in the geometry and in terms of the paint work that was put into that and the eyes—the little nuances like some of the veins; lines within the scales; texturing—just building it up. And we continued to evolve some of that paint work through the course of most of the film. It started off with quite a bit of detail and then we refined that on a shot-by-shot basis."

A CGI artist draws with a digitizing pen and tablet, which emulate more traditional art tools. Artists can look at the screen at the same time they're moving the pen, most of which are pressure-sensitive. For things like painting, this process works very well, but for animation, the artist typically uses a mouse to move different limbs.

ILM animators looked at elephants and other animals as a point of reference. Noted Squires, "You have to find a style that works with the dragon. The director had a lot of input with that. One of the issues was, since he's so large, do we make him slow, to match that mass? But in this case, since he's so much of a character and actor, if you had to slow him down that much you would lose

the storytelling quality. We went with making him the character—making him an actor as the first priority—and trying to fit all the different weight and mass issues within that."

Squires sees the capability of rendering a CGI actor in the next couple of years. "We actually have some CG people characters in this film, and it works well for short shots or things where there's a lot of action," he said. "The hair and other types of issues are difficult, but not impossible to do. Certainly we're not expecting to replace a typical actor in any form any time soon, but in certain cases, for stunt type of work, or if you want to reproduce or recreate

somebody who's not here now, then that is an option."

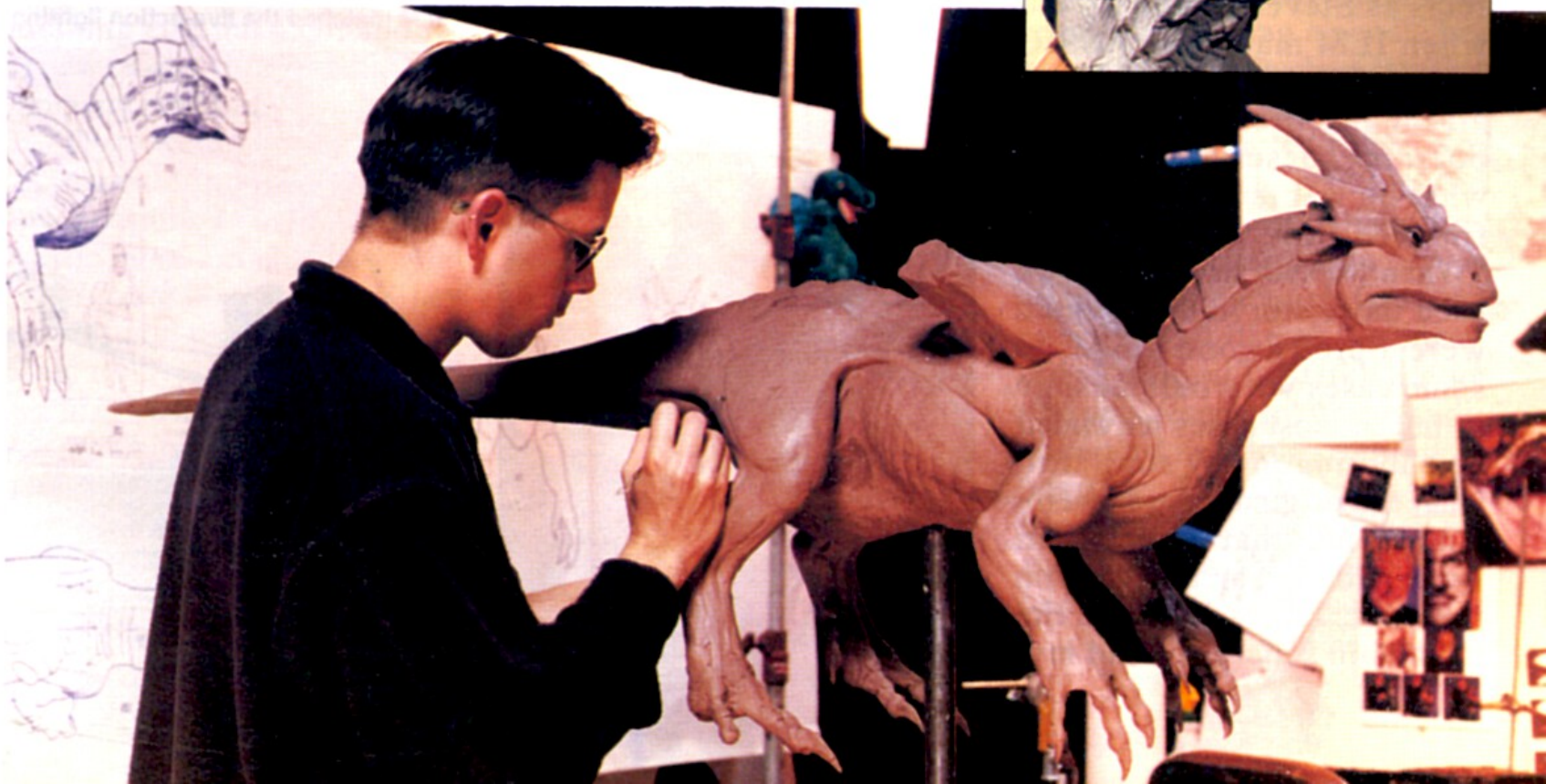
A major concern on DRAGONHEART involved giving the dragon facial expressions since Draco was much more than just a dragon. He could talk. To help facilitate this, the dragon was designed with a short snout to enable him to speak convincingly. Carry Phillips wrote some custom software that the animators could use to manipulate the facial expressions, including the lips and tongue, so that they could set up the lip sync to work along with the expressions.

"In our case we used a lot of references from different Sean Connery films, both stills and

looking at videos," said Squires. "The animators did a great job of capturing that sense of Sean Connery in the dragon. Since Sean Connery is providing the voice of the dragon, [director] Rob Cohen wanted to get a little bit of that Sean Connery within the dragon. Sean has certain facial expressions, the raised eyebrows and a few other characteristics that you recognize. So those types of things are put in



Right: A marquette of Draco's mouth with figurine was used for proportion and scale. Below: Character designer and sculptor Peter Koenig fashions Draco.





and start laying out his lights. Unfortunately computer graphic lighting isn't the same as real lighting, so you have to make certain adjustments to achieve that illusion. I would sit down with them and go over it, and basically continue to refine it while the animation was going on."

But what is it that really makes DRAGONHEART the major stride forward in CGI that it is? The fact that a live action actor and a CGI character interact as though both are equally real. Draco interacts directly with Dennis Quaid and the other actors and actresses in the film in a one on one type of relationship.

"It's not stylized," Squires pointed out. "It's supposed to be lit and look like he's actually in the scene, and he goes through the whole range of expressions during the course of the film. We have the issues of the lip sync. We have the technical director issues of making him look correct, and the animators are catching all of the motions and little nuances built into that to end up with 22 minutes worth of film seeing this dragon. We've got three times the number of shots we had in JURASSIC PARK, and in this case most of the scenes are daylight and most of the time you're holding them for a very long time, because he's in the midst of dialogue. So you're cutting back and forth, seeing both the other actors and Draco in the same scene at the same time. This is taking it a much greater step in that direction for a CG character. □

Draco revs up in battle. Left: Character animator Rob Coleman, digital effects artist Barry Armour, and digital paint and roto supervisor Sandy Houston reviewing the effects at ILM.

to him," said Squires. "We would transmit the latest takes from the different shots that we thought would be worthwhile viewing. He would view them there, while we were talking on the phone, and primarily gave the animators direction as he would an actor, talking about the expression or some of the key emotions or actions that they should be capturing, describing the character he wanted to get out of that."

ILM took great care to match the live-action lighting in CGI sequences, using a white sphere as a reference. "Typically we would have some lighting notes about how the things were lit on location," said Squires. "In this case most of it was shot outside so it has certain conventions based on reality. The technical director would take a look at the scene



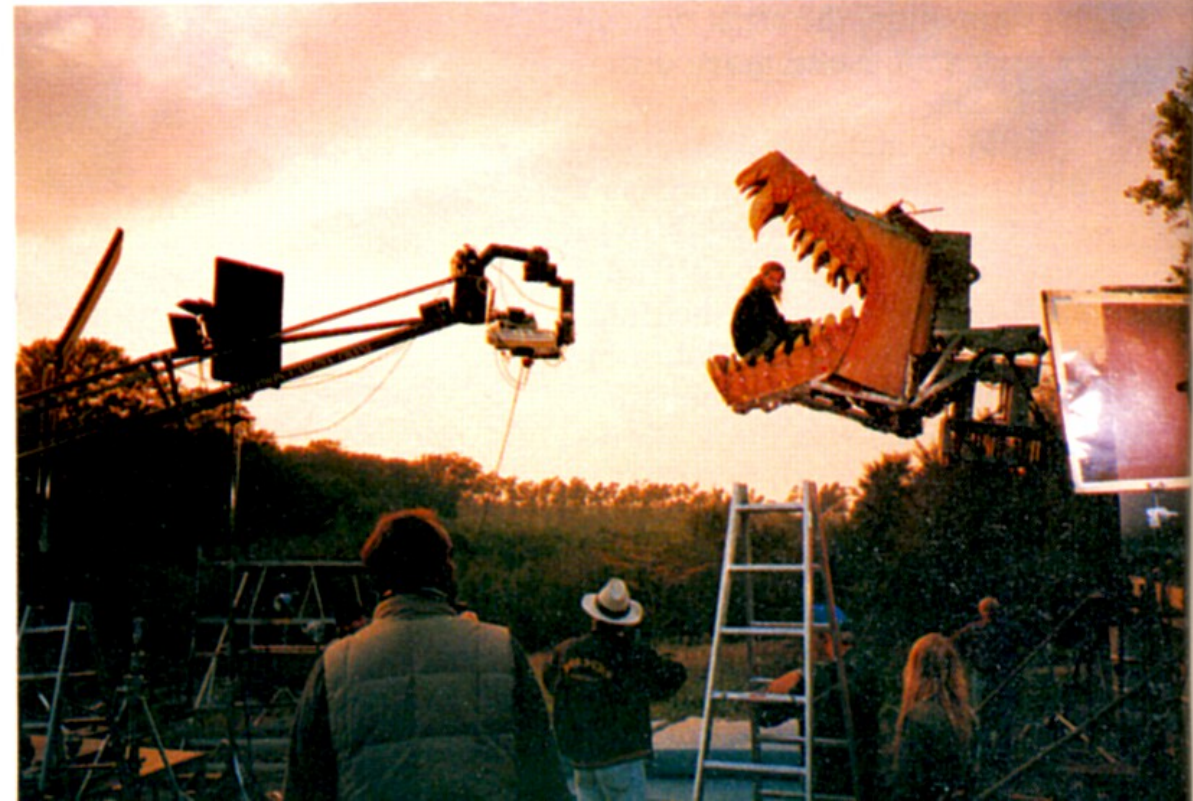
there. And when we were working on a specific scene the director may say, 'Okay, I want this kind of like how Sean Connery was in this particular type of film, just that type of an attitude or expression.' So the animators would use that as the basis as well."

Director Rob Cohen was very much involved in how the CGI progressed and he had just as much input on these effects as Steven Spielberg did when ILM made JURASSIC PARK. "He was involved in all the pre-production storyboarding, describing exactly what he wanted to see in the finished film," said Squires. "When we shot in Slovakia we used those storyboards which were a pretty good guide. In some cases we would change it, but in most cases we ended up shooting pretty similar to what the original boards were. And then at that point, when we would start an animator on the shot, James Strauss, the animation supervisor and my-

self would go over with the animator and the technical director and describe what the scene was, what some of the motivation was, and discuss some of the surrounding shots. Then the animator would take it from there."

When Cohen left to film DAYLIGHT in Rome, ILM kept in touch via satellite. "We'd do a video transmission twice a week

Left: Bowen (Dennis Quaid) in Draco's jaws, the dragon's only mechanical part. Right: Filming the battle to the death which ends in friendship. For CGI sequences, ILM matched the live-action lighting by using a white sphere for reference.



nis Quaid had to act against ping pong balls, monster sticks, and markers. Cohen was drawn to Slovakia as a possible location for filming DRAGONHEART when Bronco Lustig, who was Steven Spielberg's producer on SCHINDLER'S LIST, brought over some books on Eastern Europe.

"I opened up one book and there was the castle that I wanted," said Cohen. "It was in the Eastern part of Slovakia, and it was magnificent. It was a very well preserved tenth century edifice. I said, let's go to Slovakia, we've got one of the pieces of the puzzle there."

Filming in Slovakia lasted 104 days, beginning in July 1994 and ending in November. Filming began in 106 degree heat and ended in 7 below zero weather in the mountains.

"They had very skilled technicians that had been trained by the Russians," said Cohen. "We brought in Kit West and the whole group of English special effects guys who did RAIDERS OF THE LOST ARK and STAR WARS to do the on-set effects—the fire, explosions and all that. It was an exciting place to be at that time and the wildness of the forests and the limitless vistas of mountains—no villages or cities or roads—made it possible to turn the camera many different directions in the given scene and really get a big vista and put the dragon and the knight or the battles right in it and not have to be squeezed-up visually."

Cohen needed to come up with a final cut of the live action footage before ILM could begin the most intensive phases of their Computer Graphic Imaging work of the dragon. "The human part of the picture was locked by April 1, 1995 because ILM needed all the sequences locked in," said Cohen. "Then the real work began because the 280,000 matrices had been built and we had done some experimentation with the lip sync and the walk cycle. I had finalized his skinning and coloration. That stuff was going on in January-February-March while we were cutting. In April we were ready to give them the cut and start really making the first of the 180 Draco shots."

Cohen stressed that even be-

COHEN ON DRACO—THE ACTOR

"When all is said and done, it is the relationship that is made so real and emotional between a human actor and a CGI actor that I hope is the true achievement."



On location, producer Raffaella DeLaurentiis, visual effects supervisor Scott Squires and director Rob Cohen, holding Phil Tippett's dragon model.

fore he signed on to do DRAGONHEART, he knew that only CGI could achieve what they wanted to do with the dragon. "We went to see JURASSIC PARK at an early screening and I said to [Universal production exec] Tom Pollock, 'You know what the sequel to JURASSIC PARK is?' And he said, 'Yeah, we're trying to convince Steven to do it.' I said, 'No, the sequel to JURASSIC PARK is DRAGONHEART'. He looked at me and I saw the little light go on in his head and I think that's really where the turning point came. Thanks to Steven and ILM, the way to make the dragon was clear. So we never entertained anything else but CGI, and we never entertained any other company but ILM.

"There were some things that I'd learned from ILM that were now possible. I could move the camera more. I could crane. And I also could do things that they weren't sure they could do but I could try to push them like having him swim and having him be amphibious and have the flying and the whole level of interaction with water and the earth. The CGI work has tremendously improved and furthered since JURASSIC. We have complete

lip-sync. We have acting facial expressions. Draco, I would say, is the first CGI actor. But when all is said and done, it is the relationship that is made so real and emotional between a human actor and a CGI actor that I hope is the true achievement."

Even though Cohen was in Rome directing the Sylvester Stallone film DAYLIGHT during much of the post-production CGI process of DRAGONHEART, he maintained regular contact with ILM via satellite. "I had calls either daily or every other day with satellite hookup where I could see them and the shots, and they could hear me," said Cohen. "I was videotaped on my end for gestures and posture and things that I was trying to communicate. I would sit there for three hours a night and run a shot 20 times and take them through what I wanted changed in the emotion or the movement or the lip-sync. I made it my business to learn everything I could know about CGI and this type of visual effect. I had a very wonderful team in Scott Squires, who's the visual effects supervisor. Judith Weaver, who's the visual effects producer. James Strauss, who's the head animator, Mark Moore,

the art director (he and I did a lot of the final storyboarding work together, along with the late Steve Price), and about a hundred other young men and women who form the team of animators and technical directors that make up the Draco unit at ILM."

The sound design for DRAGONHEART is done by Richard Anderson, who won the Academy Award for THE LION KING. The dragon has a number of different roars and each one has 10 to 15 different elements in it. Many different sounds were brought together to not only give the roar enormous power, but to maintain the illusion that this is a dragon. "The roars are made of everything from naval cannons to lions to hurricane winds," said Cohen. "All of these different elements that we mix into something that will vibrate the sub-woofers and give it the scale of something 43 feet long and 18 feet high. The same thing with the wing flaps. Each sound is manufactured from lots of different elements that get mixed in a way that are unidentifiable individually, but come out with some fresh kind of impact."

While some filmmakers try to distance their work from everything which has gone before, Cohen acknowledges the achievements of the past. "I admired, in their time, JASON AND THE ARGONAUTS and SEVENTH VOYAGE OF SINBAD," he said. "Of course Matthew Robbins DRAGONSLAYER was a landmark for Go-Motion animation. I certainly owe an enormous debt to Steven and JURASSIC PARK. I took a lot of my inspiration from the 1933 KING KONG in terms of threading a needle between a ferocious character that one could love or feel sympathetic to, and to the bravery of that film and that time. I looked to all of the movies in the genre, whether I admired them or not, and learned as much from the ones I didn't like as the ones I did. I wanted to strike a tone that was respectful of the audience and as sophisticated as possible, and to not say, 'Oh, it's a fairy tale so we can get away with anything, because it doesn't matter, because it's

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Pinocchio Syndrome

Writer-director Kevin Tenney returns the original fairy tale to its sinister beginning.

By F. Colin Kingston

Before it became a Disney classic, PINOCCHIO was a dark and sinister fairy tale. In the original version, written in 1882 by Carlo Collodi, the title character was prone to fits of violence and rage. It is this aspect of the story, not the one by Disney, which Trimark Pictures hopes will appeal to audiences who may be hungry for more than just the typical horror film. Written and directed by Kevin Tenney (WITCHBOARD), THE PINOCCHIO SYNDROME concentrates more on suspense than blood and gore. Vidmark was scheduled to release the film direct-to-video in August, where it might benefit from the attention paid to New Line's live-action theatrical release in July of THE ADVENTURES OF PINOCCHIO.

"The movie is a psychological thriller, more akin to Anthony Hopkins' MAGIC than to LEPRECHAUN, GHOULIES, or CHILD'S PLAY," said Tenney.

Rosalind Allen plays a single mom who works for the public defenders office, representing a local woodcarver (Lewis Van Bergen, RAGE OF HONOR) accused of brutally murdering his son. Allen comes into possession of the wooden Pinocchio doll carved by her client for his son, which becomes the



Jennifer Clark (Rosalind Allen), a public defender, fights off the attacking puppet created by her client, a local woodcarver accused of brutally murdering his son.

favorite doll of her daughter (Brittany Alyse Smith). "Basically, you don't even know for a fact whether or not the puppet is alive or if the little girl who owns the puppet is losing her mind," said Tenney.

According to Tenney, the exact origin of Pinocchio in this film, "...was a big bone of contention. Trimark wanted to know what the backstory was. I said, 'You mean like he's carved from the old broom of a witch who died in the 1700s? No.' We don't really explain why he is what he is, but we do offer a theory."

Allen was happy with the direction the film took. "Kevin is going to make a big stab, no

pun intended," she said smiling, "at making this film more of a psychological thriller, as opposed to going for the really obvious scares. You will be scared in this movie and it will be very creepy, but you will have to think your way through it. It's not going to be really obvious."

It was Tenney's concentration on character development which attracted Allen to the role. "Jennifer Clark is a fully developed character, which is something you don't always get to do in this kind of genre movie," said Allen. "She is a woman with a lot of flaws, but she is really trying to do the best she can."

One of the most enjoyable

aspects of the role for Allen was working with her real-life husband Todd Allen, who plays her boyfriend David and had previously worked with director Tenney on WITCHBOARD. Said Allen, "It is our third time working together and I loved it. The biggest challenge of all was doing the love scenes. It was much harder than I thought."

Gabe Bartalos, (BASKET CASE, LEPRECHAUNS I, II, III) lends his considerable talents to the special effects. The film attracted him for several reasons. "The main attraction was designing a new look for Pinocchio that wasn't related to the Disney look," said Bartalos. "We wanted to create a loveable character that still has the potential to get nasty."

"We created a bunch of different parts including interchangeable legs for when Pinocchio has to sit, different arms that go on him when he has different movements, and gloves so he could grip things."

Making facial expressions for a wooden doll proved easier than you might think. "We made three interchangeable heads. You see different expressions on his face, but they don't happen on camera, they happen off camera. The changes are really subtle," said Bartalos.

Other special effects were needed for the killing scenes.

“The attraction was designing a new look for Pinocchio,” said Bartalos. “We wanted to create a loveable character that has the potential to get nasty.”



Verne Troyer, as Pinocchio (above), once played an Elvis doll who killed Elvis impersonators. Left: Makeup effects supervisor Gabe Bartalos suiting up Troyer.

Playing Pinocchio presented several challenges for him. “It was very restricting in certain areas because they basically wanted me to have movements similar to a doll and not really humanlike,” said Troyer. “I met with Gabe two or three weeks before we started filming. He took a body cast. I’ve taken a lot of body casts and I’m kind of used to it. The head cast is actually kind of relaxing but the body cast is the worst thing. It isn’t easy limiting your movement and standing there for a long time.”

Troyer was able to draw on his past experience playing a similar role in the short-lived UPN series *THE WATCHER*. “I played an Elvis doll that went around stabbing and killing Elvis impersonators.”

Troyer is enjoying his recent success. “I’ve always wanted to act since I was in high school. It is just a matter of getting an opportunity and getting your feet in the door. I was working with a telephone company in Texas when I got the call from the producers of the film *BABY’S DAY OUT*, which I worked on

“We created a prosthetic arm and rammed an actual blade through it. We had hydraulic pumps for the blood behind it. We put on quite a quick show of blood,” Bartalos noted with a grin that could only be appreciated by a true horror fan.

Of director Tenney, Bartalos said, “I really like the direction Kevin is taking on the film. He is making a scary movie. The audience is brought along on the journey. Is it the girl or is it the puppet? The horror comes from the movie-making and not the special effects.”

Verne Troyer plays the role of Pinocchio. Troyer, whose most recent credits include *BABY’S DAY OUT* and *THE AMAZING PANDA ADVENTURE*, is 28 years old and stands 31 inches tall.

with Rick Baker. After that I did *THE AMAZING PANDA ADVENTURE*, also with Rick Baker. I hope my career transcends into getting away from costume work. I don’t mind it, but it would be nice to play myself eventually.”

Originally scheduled for a 22-day shooting schedule, the film ended up shooting a total of 24 days. Said director Tenney, “Everything looks great but it has been the most jinxed production I’ve ever dealt with.

“I’ve had more technical problems on this one film than all my other previous films combined. I don’t know if I was just lucky until now and it all caught up to me, or what.”

Setbacks included a blown generator and a shutter problem which forced two days worth of re-shooting. Another problem Tenney ran into is not so common. “Every time you get a take you want, you re-set the camera and open it up to look at the film gauge. What you’re looking for is a hair on the gate that can ruin the shot,” Tenney explained. “I’ve never actually had anyone find a hair on a gate in the previous six movies I’ve done. We’ve found two on this film.” Despite the minor difficulties, he is very pleased with the finished product. “The theories we explore are theories I’ve been wanting to put into a film for a while,” he said.

“A concept I found interesting is what if there was something that motivated serial killers other than their own insanity, that the rest of us are not privy to? What if the Son of Sam really did hear the dog talking, because something demonic was making the dog talk?”

Any true examination of de-

monic forces should include an examination of God and religion. *THE PINOCCHIO SYNDROME* explores those aspects as well. Noted Allen, “My character refers to herself as a lost lamb. She was raised a Catholic but considers herself ostracized now because she is divorced.” The role’s re-examination of God and religion comes during a pivotal time of the film. Said Allen, “She goes back to church to talk to the priest about her beliefs about evil and to see what he thinks.”

Tenney has high hopes for *THE PINOCCHIO SYNDROME*. “I want to make something that hopefully is genuinely scary and says something about my own percep-



Gabe Bartalos puts the finishing touches on the puppet design, which included interchangeable heads, legs, arms and gloves.

tions of evil, because this is probably the last horror film I’m going to do for a while. I don’t want the audience to just say it was fun. I’d like this film to actually be disturbing.”

Reflecting on all the problems he had during production, Tenney added with a smile, “Maybe my theories hit too close to home. Obviously the powers that be don’t want this film to be made.” □

SOMEWHERE IN TIME

Fans keep the neglected film alive with their annual reunion at the actual location.

By Harriet Modler

"...special films that elicit a fiery passion in moviegoers long after their initial release; that have been taken to heart as if they were abandoned orphans in a hostile world, cherished, protected, and enthusiastically championed by segments of the movie audience."

—Cult Movies
by Danny Peary

The critics were savage and unforgiving. *SOMEWHERE IN TIME* "does for time travel what the Hindenburg did for dirigibles," wrote Vincent Canby in the *New York Times*. Of Christopher Reeve, a Los Angeles newspaper critic carped, "He gives the kind of endearingly silly performance that could easily become the cornerstone of a camp reputation."

SOMEWHERE IN TIME died aborning in 1980, just a few weeks after its release. Fifteen years later, it possesses a mystical and pervasive hold on thousands of devotees—from hard-nosed businessmen who are not embarrassed to see it and weep in public, to women who have faithfully copied the costumes of co-star Jane Seymour, to a new audience of teens, recruited by the enthusiasm of older family and friends.

Anyone with access to cable or a VCR has likely run across the love story that transcends time when a frustrated playwright sees a portrait of a long-ago actress, determines to find her, and self-hypnotizes himself back to 1912. Video stores report regular rentals in numbers surprising for an older film with such poor initial results. "A lot of people buy it to give as gifts," said Darren Smarslock, manager of Video Video in Westfield, N.J.

One reason for the enduring passion is the organization International Network of Somewhere In Time Enthusiasts (INSITE).



Above: Richard Collier (Christopher Reeve) meets Elise McKenna (Jane Seymour) for the first time in *SOMEWHERE IN TIME*. Inset: On the rocky beach of Lake Huron on Mackinac Island stands a plaque commemorating the spot where the meeting was filmed.

Founded in 1990 by an unlikely advocate, Bill Shepard, an employment trainer from Pomona, California, INSITE is one of the few fan clubs devoted to a film instead of a celebrity, with over 1,000 members in the U.S. and abroad.

In hindsight, to a number of actors and crew, the reason for the poor initial reception was a matter of bad timing. In a booming voice that captivated dozens of people at the fifth annual *SOMEWHERE IN TIME* reunion—held at the Grand Hotel in Mackinac Island, Michigan, the 19th-century location used in the film—Bill Erwin, who played the elderly bellman, Arthur, said, "It was a cynical period at the time the film went public. Manufactured and nurtured by the media, all pictures [of that era] had to have a truck blown up or nudity to appeal to the public. Here, we have a valentine, and how do you sell a valentine? To this day, I don't go to the grocery store where people don't say, 'It's my favorite picture.' It's usually a favorite for people in their 30s and 40s. These people grew up in a cynical period and had never known love in the truly romantic sense that this picture represents."

In a panel discussion before an audience of about 100 fans during the weekend, Susan French, who played "old" Elise, agreed with Erwin. "It was a cynical time. People didn't want to admit they were moved by anything," she said. French had a very personal reason for the pain caused by critical rejection of *SIT*; her niece, Sheila Benson, was film critic for the *Los Angeles Times* and pointedly commented that even her aunt's acting couldn't save it!

In a conversation from Marseilles, France, where he's working on *HERCULE ET SHERLOCK*, director Jeannot Szwarc dismissed the reviews, tartly saying, "People have long ceased caring about critics. They are as cynical and corrupt as politicians."

ZHIVAGO also got some terrible reviews. So? In my opinion, *SOMEWHERE IN TIME* survived because it is genuinely romantic and a very good love story. The feelings are sincere and without vulgarity. The characters have honor and dignity. It appeals to the best in all of us."

The man who started it all is Richard Matheson, who based the screenplay on his successful novel *Bid Time Return*. The original idea came from a visit to an old opera house in the gold-mining town of Virginia City, Nevada, where he found a haunting portrait of the real-life Victorian actress, Maud Adams. Originally, he set the book at the Hotel Del Coronado in San Diego, but when Szwarc, Matheson, and producer Stephen Deutsch went to check it out, the prevalence of TV antennas and other late 20th-century artifacts caused the fortuitous location change to Mackinac Island.

The sudden demise of the film was a real shocker given Reeve's giant following from *SUPERMAN* and Szwarc's big success in directing *JAWS 2*. Matheson said, "I didn't realize that one reason for the failure of the film at the boxoffice was that, initially, it had been decided to release the film on a

TIME



This romantic scene is as explicit as the PG film ever got, squelching audience acceptance at the time.

limited basis—a theater or two in each community. Then—and I just found this out recently—there were two previews that were so incredible in their success that Universal decided they had another LOVE STORY on their hands and mass released it—to its doom, of course. It should have been released to a theatre or two in each community. It would have caught on eventually then, as it did—the hard way.”

During the weekend panel, Paul Cook, who played Dr. Hull, spoke of an unusual phenomenon. Though SIT would normally be considered a “woman’s picture” in the genre of 1940s’ love stories, this is a film which men are not afraid to admit they like. “Romance is what drives a lot of us...a desire for the ultimate altruistic romance...and this film is about hope. It says something about a man and woman that can’t be denied.”

During the last weekend of October—

not the summertime seen in the film, but a time of rain, autumnal chill and the last bit of fall foliage—over 600 film aficionados fill the Grand Hotel to capacity. For an outsider who comes for the first time, it’s an extraordinary experience. Bonded by their common affection for the film, people are unexpectedly warm to strangers and delighted to tell how the movie affected their lives.

Last year, Chicago teacher’s aide Pam Ellis first met her love, Walter Trentadue, at a lobby elevator. Both, recently divorced, were nursing emotional wounds. A detective from Skokie, Illinois, Trentadue exemplifies the film’s pull on unlikely people. Then, there’s the story of Chicagoans Sharyl and Richard Pyrdol, who met because a friend of Sharyl’s remembered that they both loved the musical theme!

One of the highlights of the weekend is the costume contest, followed by a parade in the elegant parlor. Remarkably, approximately one-third of all attendees dress in period costume. Some sew for months, even faithfully copying the film’s cos-

tume designs by Jean Pierre Dorleac.

In a telephone interview, Dorleac, who received the sole Oscar nomination for *SOMEWHERE IN TIME*, recalled “We went to great extremes to make it look so ‘delicious.’ We shot the first part of the film in strong color...earth tones and drab tones. We wanted the present to be hard and harsh. Going back in time, everything goes into warm pastel colors.”

Dorleac laughed about naming his color selections after Baskin Robbins 31 Flavors. “I call the beige outfit ‘vanilla almond,’ the pink walking dress is ‘strawberry parfait,’ and the green dress is ‘daiquiri ice cream!’”

In spite of its release into an era dominated by misanthropic contempt for romanticism, *SOMEWHERE IN TIME* acquired a life of its own. Early in 1990, Bill Shepard began wondering if there were others like him. “I started to run some classified ads in *Cinefantastique* and other film-related magazines. It said, ‘If you like the movie *SOMEWHERE IN TIME* as much as I do, please write me.’ Immediately, I got 30 or 40 responses, convincing me to run more ads.”

Shepard went to the Grand Hotel, where



The film died a quick death during its initial release, but the International Network of Somewhere in Time Enthusiasts keeps it alive at their annual weekend convention. Clockwise from left: 1) The Grand Hotel on Mackinac Island, where the film was shot, serves as the site of the convention gathering. 2) Susan French, who played the older Elise McKenna, stands in front of the younger Elise McKenna’s portrait (played by Seymour) at the *SOMEWHERE IN TIME* weekend. The portrait is on display in a parlor at the Grand Hotel. 3) The festivities include a costume contest for which fans line up outfits based on the film’s costumes.





Peter and Harriet Modler join the costume parade in 1912 outfits. Harriet's was worn in the film.

the film was shot during the summer of 1979, to propose that INSITE hold a convention there. Each year, from May onward, Mackinac Island attracts up to 100,000 visitors, and the Grand Hotel bills itself as "America's largest summer resort."

Beginning in 1991, the hotel began sponsoring SOMEWHERE IN TIME weekends, paying for the attendance of all the film's actors and crafts talent who choose to attend. Reeve himself showed up in 1994, with his wife, Dana.

In a recent telephone conversation with Bill Shepard, Reeve talked about his new commitment as a board member of the American Paralysis Association. This year, a large plaster cast of the penny that figured so prominently in the film was auctioned for \$600, and nearly \$2,000 was raised for donation to the association.

Members of INSITE are now lobbying to have Reeve's star installed in the Hollywood Walk of Fame. In a perfect world, they hope it would be next to that of Jane Seymour.

Though Seymour herself has yet to appear on Mackinac Island, the film remains one of her favorites. At the May 1995 reunion at Universal City, Seymour, now starring in DR. QUINN, MEDICINE WOMAN, said she still gets teary-eyed when she watches it. In an interview with the *Los Angeles Times*, she said, "It's the ultimate romance, the idea that the person, the one, does exist." Obviously, a lot of people agree with her. □

SOMEWHERE IN TIME

CHRISTOPHER REEVE

The hero behind the cape discusses the longevity of the cult fantasy-romance.

By Jo Addie
and Sue Uram

When Christopher Reeve first donned his cape and flew across movie screens in SUPERMAN, he was the personification of the comic book hero. But when he appeared on this year's Academy Awards presentation, a quadriplegic in a motorized wheelchair, he was nothing short of heroic. Paralyzed from the neck down after his tragic accident, he joked about his condition and showed the world that he is a true survivor. The crowd gave him a standing ovation.

Before his injury, although Reeve was a stunningly handsome actor, he felt the need never to stop learning; he always considered himself a "work in progress." After his accident, he rallied his reserves to show the world that he could not only play a comic book hero in movies, but that there are indeed heroes in real life.

Back in 1993, Reeve made a surprise appearance, to the delight of all present, at the convention of the International Network Of Somewhere In Time Enthusiasts. Some 15 years after the movie was filmed, Reeve proved to be as excited about the event as his fans. He commented in his opening statements that he was concerned about the passage of time because he wanted to return while he still looked like Richard Collier, the character he had portrayed in the movie. "When you have a memory of the movie and it really lives," he explained, "I would imagine it can sometimes be disappointing to meet the real people close up. I had already experienced this problem with the SUPERMAN



Reeve followed up the blockbuster SUPERMAN with SOMEWHERE IN TIME, a smaller-scale film that showed his interest in accepting new acting challenges.

movies. I am 42 years old now, and I was 24 years old when we did the first SUPERMAN. I am already to the point where a mommy will bring her little child up to me and say, 'Look, there is Superman,' and the kid goes, 'No way!'"

Reeve is invariably described by all who meet him with two very simple words: "nice guy." Ample evidence of this was seen during the question-and-answer session, when he repeatedly displayed his unique sense of humor. Greeted by the actor who played the doctor in SIT—the doctor who, having failed to resuscitate Collier, is known to fans as "Dr. Death"—Reeve laughed as he replied, "I know when you last saw me you carried me away as a corpse. I am feeling much better now!"

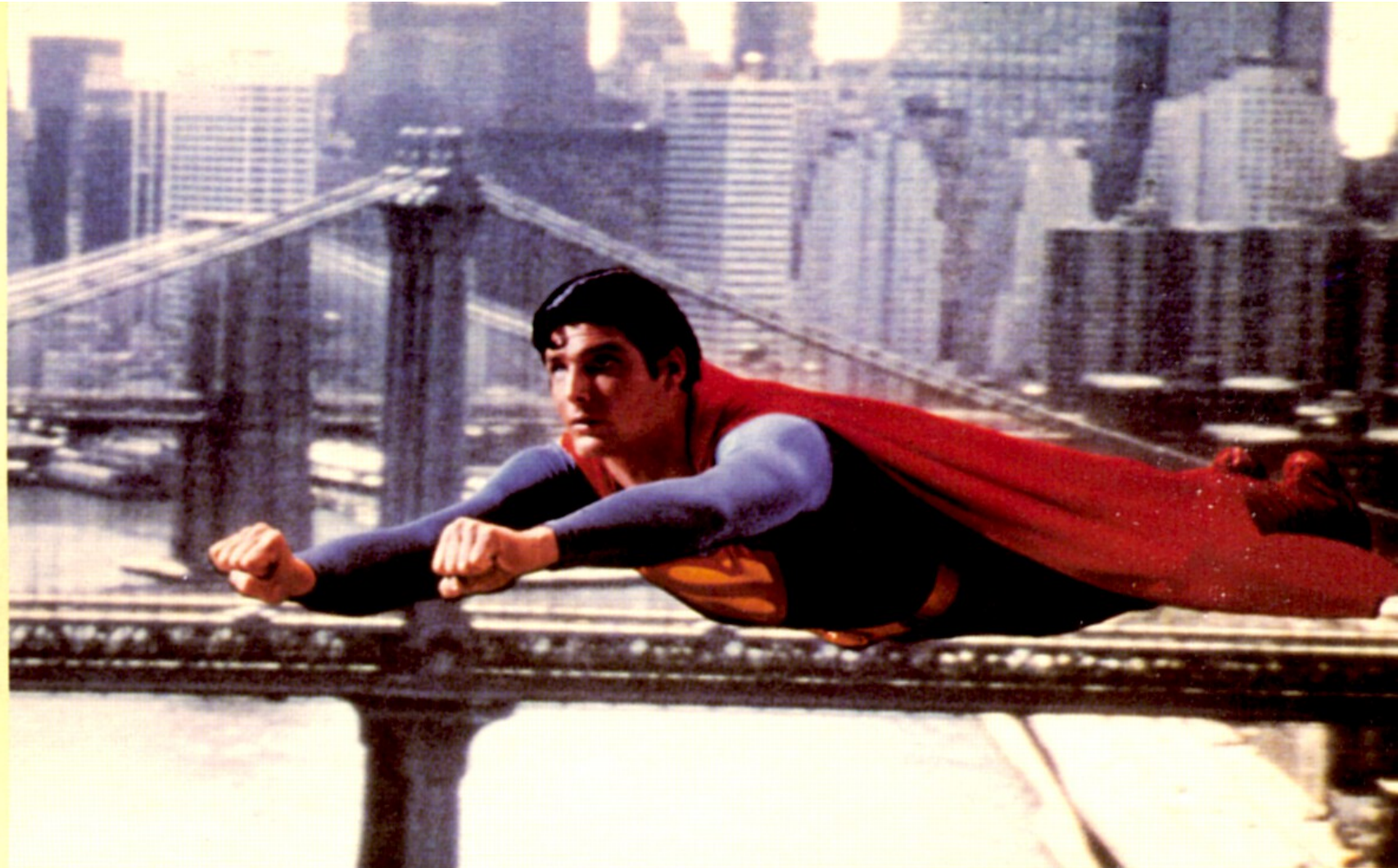
When the questions took a shift and he was asked to give advice to young lovers of today, he adroitly responded, "I think that this is sometimes a world in which it is difficult to believe that anything romantic is possi-

ble. Everyday life is pretty grimy and gritty and difficult, and we have lots of choices and problems we have to face. In the 19th century, I think it was easier to hold that romantic candle up and sort of keep the flame lit because the time was more conducive to that. I think that people of today must make that extra effort—sacrifices in your work, in the time you spend away—and make choices that will allow romance to live. I think that is the important thing to do today in the 1990s."

Reeve is a meticulous actor. An example of this is seen in his preparation for a scene in SIT wherein the apparent dialogue was masked over by music. "I am actually talking about some of my ideas about writing," he explained, "about the plays I want to write. This conversation is later picked up and is heard at the lighthouse scene. The director mainly wanted to see us in animated conversation, and we knew that the sound was not going to be used. But I wanted it to be something relevant. I am

not one of those actors who can just mouth 'rhubarb-rhubarb-rhubarb' and just fake it. Because later they might just decide to use it, and then you really have a problem. When I got the part, and since I have never had any kind of writing discipline, I decided to see what I could do to write a play. As you know, early in the movie, Richard has a writer's block problem. So, I started a screenplay about my family. I got halfway through the first act and experienced the very writer's block that Richard experienced. I was frustrated and knew that I could not do it. And, since I like to dive into things, and one of the great things about acting is that it takes us to places we would not be able to go to normally—I once played a disabled Vietnam veteran and have traveled through time in other movies—I think that this is one of the great benefits of our work. As long as you have curiosity about people, the scripts will take you to some interesting places."

Another example of Reeve's dedication to portraying his characters as realistically as possible, is illustrated by his retelling of the now infamous "horse allergy" story. "One of the biggest problems in SIT is a scene in the stables, where Richard Collier has been dumped and tied up, and the close-up is having a horse neighing in my face. There were horses everywhere, so it was like allergy medicine in one hand and fighting off the sneezes on the other. There is a happy ending to that as well. For some reason, in the mid-1980s, I was cast as a captain in the calvary in a television film with Paul Scofield of ANNA KARENINA. Knowing me, if I had to go write an act of a play for SIT, you figure I had to go learn to ride a horse for the other movie. So, I armed up with the allergy medicine and went off with an instructor to my brother's farm and took a crash course in horse riding, which was enough to get me through the movie. If you look at ANNA KARENINA that is me in the middle of the Hungarian National Equestrian team doing a steeple chase. I was in the middle for a good reason: be-



Reeve soared to boxoffice success in 1978 with his engaging portrayal of SUPERMAN, which led to two sequels.

cause if I was about to go, they could catch me and keep me on the horse."

While INSITE founder Bill Shepard is currently lending his efforts to obtaining funds for Reeve's Walk Of Fame Star, Jo Addie, a long-time associate of Reeve's, directs her energies toward keeping the public focus on his remarkable recovery efforts. Because Reeve now must concentrate on overcoming his disability—he is able to speak only by controlling his exhalation so as to block off the tracheotomy in his throat, which is connected to a respirator—he understandably has not given many recent interviews. However, Addie was granted a private interview with the actor during which he revealed some notable insights into his character. After his huge success as Superman, many people wondered at his choice of scripts. "I felt that small films had more substance and uniqueness. Most of the films I was being offered after the SUPERMAN movies were of the action variety. And I often feel that in an action picture the central character is not much of a person. He is more of an icon. Anyone who looks heroic and could do physical action would have been suitable for the part. In a script such as SIT, there is more going on. The character goes through a wide range of emotions—an intensity of feelings. A fairly ordinary man falls

deeply in love and is willing to make extraordinary sacrifices to find his love. That is a lot more interesting than a guy running around shooting things or being terrific, so to speak. I wanted to do more challenging and risky projects. In a romantic movie it is harder to deal with the emotions than in a macho movie—if it gets too corny it is not watchable."

Dealing with the intense emotions following his character's return to the present in this movie sheds some light on Reeve's technique. "The hard part about it was not to anticipate the moment. The difficult thing about films is that you know your big moment is coming—it has been talked about, and you know how important it is to the film. Doing the take, if you get there a fraction of a second ahead of what the camera sees, you can ruin the moment. That was my big concern. I can certainly see what happens in the scene before that: I am nervously awaiting the next scene."

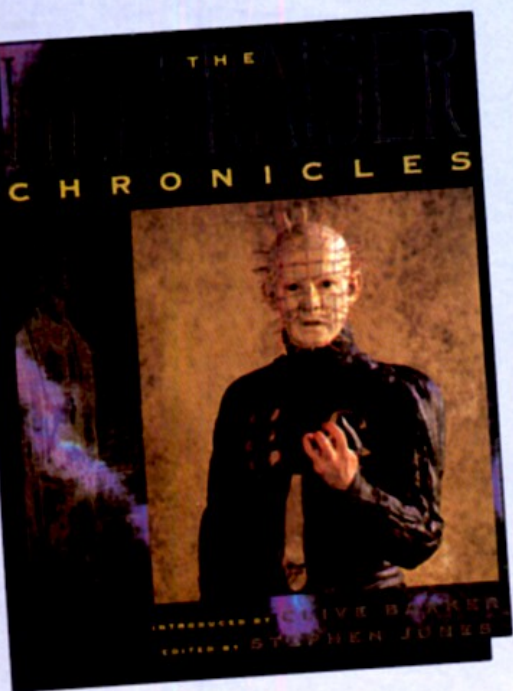
Reeve admits to seeing much of himself in his characterization of Richard Collier from SIT. "As a modern piece about a guy my own age with my interests, it was not a big stretch," he said, "not like a play where I had done a disabled homosexual Vietnam veteran. Those were all areas which I needed to understand. With Richard, I tried to bring the character as close to

myself as I could. Because the camera really wants to take a picture of what is going on in your soul and in your heart. And the less they have to filter it with characterization, the better. Oddly enough, somehow, you just insert yourself into the situation and the character comes alive. When given all the details of the character, such as clothing and setting, you somehow just let your heart take over."

On May 27, 1995 Christopher Reeve sustained a cervical neck injury in a horse riding accident. Since then, he has shown his mettle by not only surviving with dignity, but also accepting his condition as a part of a learning experience in his life. Reeve's few public appearances have been on behalf of friends and serving on board of the American Paralysis Association. Currently back home and continuing in his rehabilitation program, he is slated to provide the voice of King Arthur for Warner Bros' animated QUEST FOR THE GRAIL. By his very presence, Christopher Reeve reminds us just what it takes to be a real-life hero. He truly is a super man. □

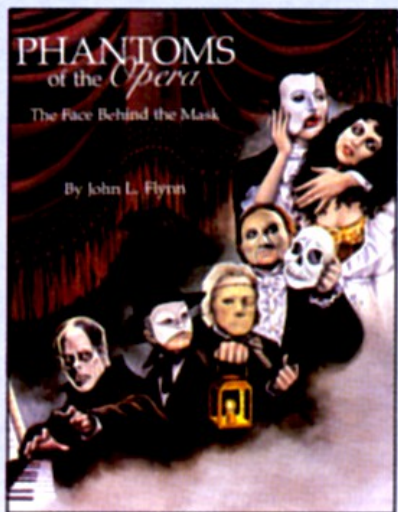
Readers wishing to donate to the Walk Of Fame Star, contact: Bill Shepard, INSITE, P.O. Box 1556, Covina, CA, 91722. For a complete copy of this interview on video tape, write: Jo Addie, AddieTech, 438 N. Waiola, La-Grange Park, IL 60525).

BESTSELLING POSTERS AND BOOKS



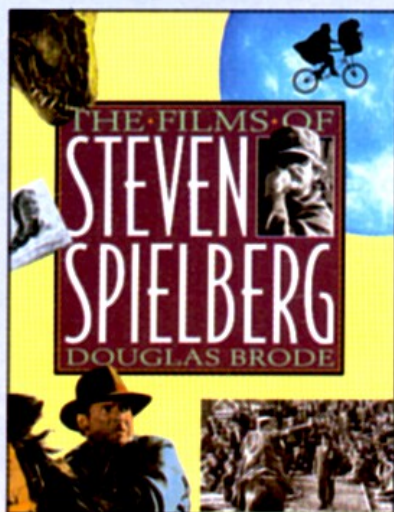
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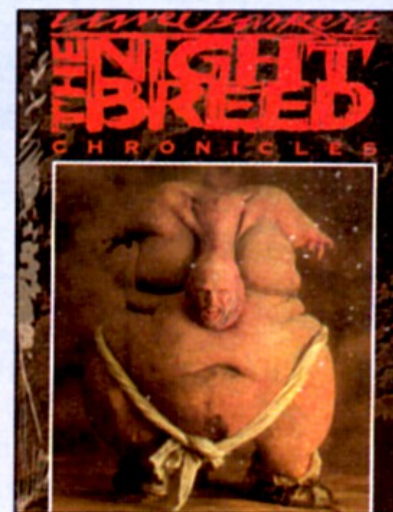
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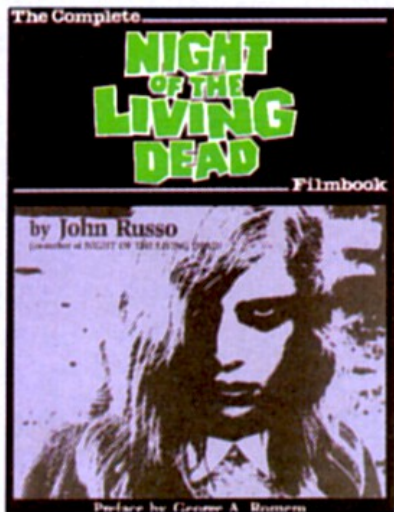
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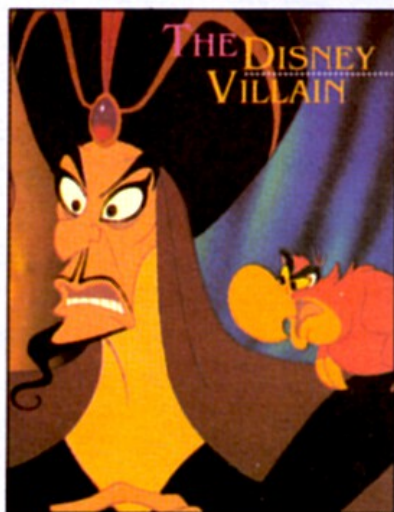
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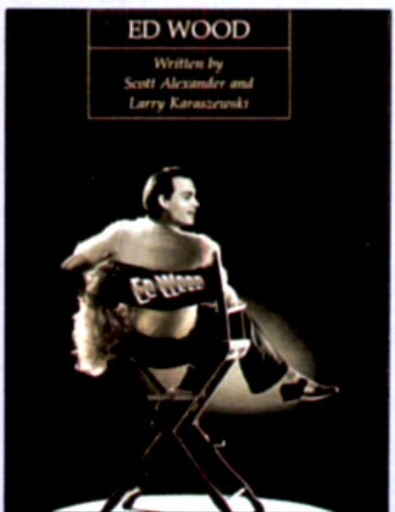
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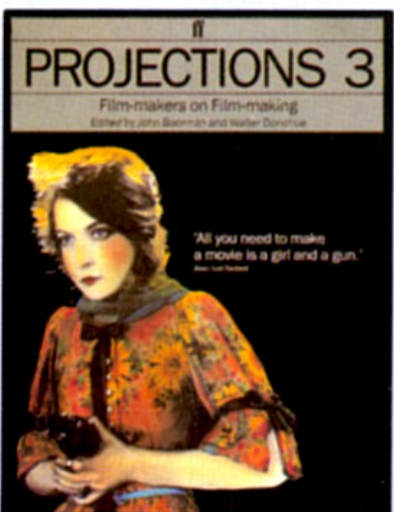


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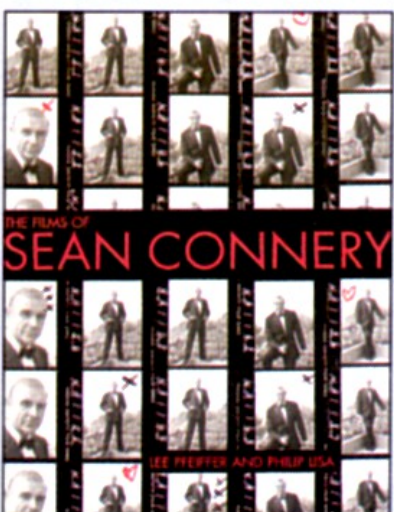
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REVIEWS

FILM RATINGS

- Must See
- Excellent
- Good
- Mediocre
- Poor

THE ARRIVAL

Directed by David Twohy. Orion Pictures. 5/96. Approx. 109 mins. PG-13. With: Charlie Sheen, Ron Silver, Lindsay Crouse, Teri Polo.

It's a good thing this opened *before* INDEPENDENCE DAY. Not that it's a bad movie, but it lacks the kind of spectacle necessary to compete in a crowded summer marketplace: the action set pieces fail to match those of Twohy's previous writing credits, WATERWORLD, or TERMINAL VELOCITY.

This minor caveat aside, the film is actually rather enjoyable—less an alien invasion movie than a conspiracy film (it just happens to turn out that the conspirators are aliens). Twohy shows a fairly sure hand as a director, keeping things moving on at a reasonable clip. Sheen is likewise in good form, maintaining an increasingly wild-eyed look of paranoia which perfectly matches the unfolding events.

Special effects are sparse but good, particularly an imploding device employed twice during the course of the film, which sucks up everything in its whereabouts like the world's best vacuum cleaner. Befitting the plot structure, the appearance of the aliens is withheld until late in the film; with a few hints and glimpses to whet our appetite.

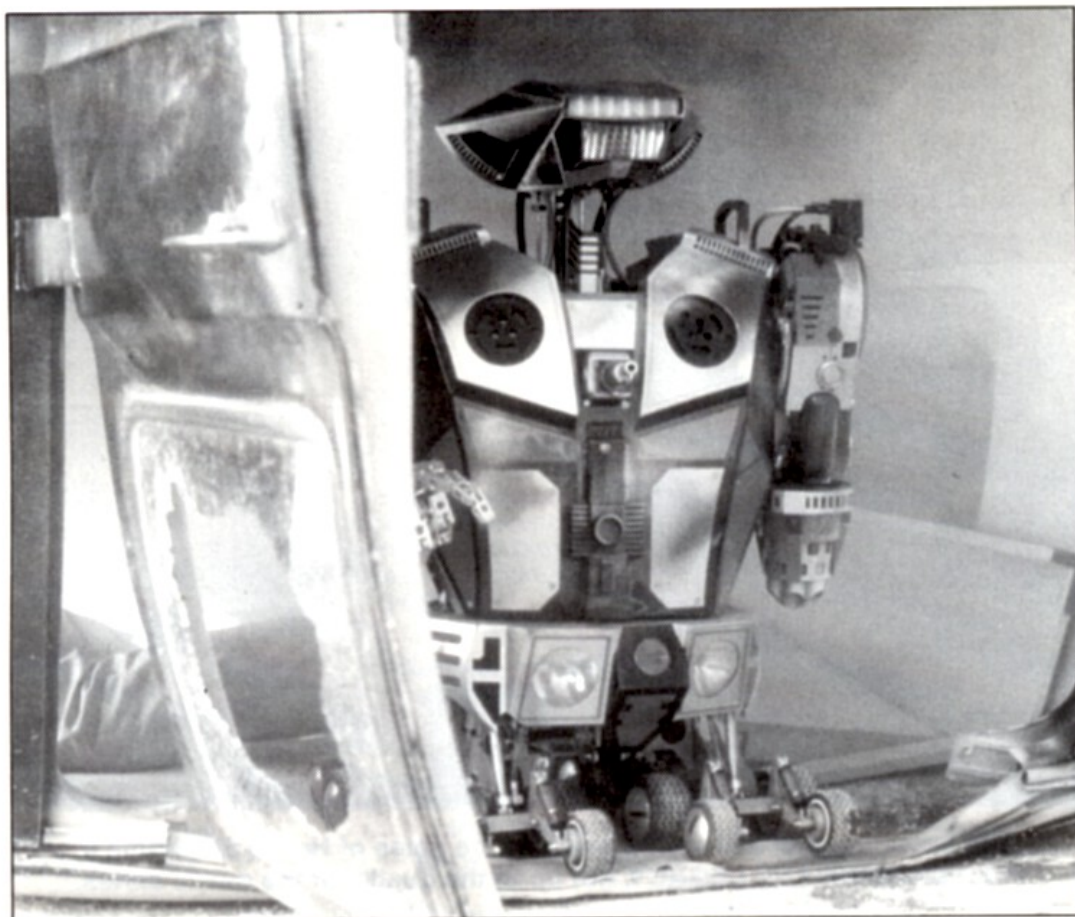
But the film's main strength arises from Twohy's writing, which manages to maintain decent characterization and dialogue, even when the plot mechanics take over and start driving the characters' actions. Unfortunately, even this strength fails Twohy at the conclusion, when he calls upon Sheen to deliver one of those "Why didn't you ask for our help instead of invading us?" speeches better suited to a 1950s sci-fi flick.

●● 1/2 Steve Biodrowski

BLONDE HEAVEN

Directed by: Ellen Cabot. Cinemax. 82 mins. No rating. With: Julie Strain, Michelle Bauer, Joe Estevez, Raelyn Saalman, Jason Clow.

When the time comes to recount the myriad reasons for the latest fall from grace for video impresario Charles Band, the films of Full Moon's short-lived off-shoot, Torchlight, will certainly rank high. The displeasure of Band's distributor Paramount with the quality and sales of the initial Torchlight films (BEACH BABES FROM BEYOND, TEST TUBE TEENS FROM THE YEAR 3000) were the beginning of the (almost) end for Full Moon. Apparently unable to even obtain video release for the remaining Torchlight productions, Band is finally unveiling them on cable TV, where BLONDE HEAVEN and CAVEGIRL ISLAND recently debuted on late night Cinemax.



EVOLVER, an all-terrain robot turned killer, designed by Steve Johnson.

Mercifully, BLONDE HEAVEN forgoes the dreadful "comedy" of the other Torchlight titles, opting to play its tale of a vampire-operated escort service relatively straight. Unfortunately, the results are so dreadful that the film garners more unintentional laughs than the other films ever got in intentional ones.

The sets and acting are strictly from hunger and the plot, something about vampire queen Julie Strain finding her lost love reincarnated in an innocent young actress, never interferes with the film's *raison d'être*—*Skin*. The first 15 minutes of the film contain no less than three sex scenes and from start to end there is more silicone on display here than in a Silly Putty factory.

During the rare moments when the film actually intrudes on the sexual histrionics, director Cabot (a pseudonym for Dave DeCoteau) handles the proceedings with a camera-nailed-to-the-floor, mastershots-only technique that would do Ed Wood proud. However, the "money shots" are executed with some style, interesting angles, evocative lighting, roving cameras and flashy editing that betray DeCoteau's origins in the porn industry.

Fans of "Scream Queens" Strain and Michelle Bauer will probably want to add a star to the rating here. In fact, the recently retired Bauer hasn't looked this beautiful in quite a while. Her lengthy sex scene, full frontal and all, is almost worth enduring the dreadful dialogue, amateur theatrics, leaden pace and non-existent plot. Almost.

● John Thonen

DEEPLY DISTURBED

Directed by Lory-Michael Ringuette. Loonic Video. 1995, 81 mins. With: Lory-Michael Ringuette, Paula Matlin, Frank X. Mur.

Flat and pointless amateur-level film, not even in the "so bad it's funny"

category. A pudgy, mother-obsessed, lesbian-hating salesman (producer/director/writer Ringuette) kidnaps a woman, keeps her captive in his apartment, rapes her repeatedly, kills her when she tries to escape, and buries her in the woods near his other victims (including Mom). Meanwhile, the police arrest and convict the wrong man. Why anyone would find this film of the slightest interest is a real mystery—it is not entertaining, has nothing new to say, is cast with unknowns, technically it is minimalist, and even exploitation fans hoping for sex and gore will be sadly disappointed. Very drab and disappointing.

○ David Wilt

DRAGONHEART

Directed by Rob Cohen. Universal Pictures. 5/96. 103 mins. PG-13. With: Dennis Quaid, David Thewlis, Pete Postlethwaite, Dina Meyer, Julie Christie, Sean Connery.

Well, the dragon is definitely the star here, but the rest of the movie isn't bad either. Sean Connery's voice and ILM's effects combine to create not just a flashy monster but a memorable character as well. His scene-stealing antics are alternately amusing, exciting, and sympathetic. The humor is occasionally overdone—Draco's anthropomorphized gestures sometimes seem cartoony (in this sense, he is a slightly less convincing creation than BABE); fortunately, these moments are brief enough to be easily forgiven, and for the most part the character's movements are a fascinating combination of cat-like grace and human expressions, which really make the animal seem alive in a way that often makes you forget you are looking at a special effect.

Not to be completely outshined, Dennis Quaid, as Bowen makes a convincing disillusioned knight of "the old school": i.e., though now a mercenary, he once be-

lieved in the Arthurian ideals of protecting the downtrodden; and, like Bogart in CASABLANCA and countless other films, he regains his idealism by the film's conclusion. In fact, his performance is good enough to make one realize that he would have been a much better choice for Robin Hood than Kevin Costner.

The script by Charles Edward Pogue does a good job of assembling all the requisite elements for a medieval fantasy, although it doesn't fully achieve the mythic resonance for which it so obviously strives. Particularly effective is his mid-film confrontation with tyrannical Einon (David Thewlis), which is not only a good sword fight but also a solid story point: Bowen realizes, to his profound despair, that the ideals he tried to instill in his former pupil failed to have any effect. Rob Cohen stages the proceedings with a good degree of excitement and fun, even if the "epic" battle scenes inevitably seem a bit squeamish and tame after BRAVEHEART. As Arthurian fantasies go, this is no EXCALIBUR, but it's aeons ahead of DRAGONSLAYER.

●● 1/2 Steve Biodrowski

EVOLVER

Directed by Mark Rosman. Sci Fi Channel 2/96. 120 mins. With: Ethan Randall, John DeLancie, Cindy Pickett, Paul Dooley, Nassira Nicola, Chance Quinn, Michael Champion, Tom Griffin, Cassidy Rae.

EVOLVER is a cautionary tale about computer game technology gone amok. Game whiz Ethan Randall hacks into a computer and falsifies his score to win an actual working model of the robot EVOLVER, a prototype based on a successful virtual reality game. The robot is able to adapt to any terrain and learn by its experiences. It comes armed with nerf pellets and is programmed to win. After being exposed to some real life violence on TV, Evolver adapts his armament to include ball bearings which results in the death of the school bully. Moreover, Evolver's basic programming is based on a failed National Defense experiment which resulted in the death of some soldiers. So the bodies continue to pile up as Evolver expands his weapons to include sawblades, knives, electrical shocks and gasoline fires.

John DeLancie plays Evolver's creator in a less supercilious way than he portrays Q on the various STAR TREK spinoffs. He should be wary of type casting after appearing in the similarly themed ARCADE. Evolver is played by a robot credited to makeup artist Steve Johnson. His design is more utilitarian than interesting. With no facial features, he makes for a dull if unstoppable villain.

● Judith Harris

GENERATION WAR: NEAR DEAD

Directed by Phil Flora. 3/96. 75 mins. With: Carolyn Humphrey, Richard Kirkwood.

If there's one thing this can't be faulted for, it's lack of novelty value. Shot using a digital capture system, post-produced on a PC, boasting virtual sets and CGI special effects, and ulti-

mately distributed on CD ROM, this SF feature at the very least serves as a harbinger for the electronic entertainments to come. Unfortunately, that's about all it has to offer, since the story—about a group of teenagers rescuing their friend from the stock Evil Government Medical Facility—is so rudimentary that even the above description offers more dramatic tension than what turns up on-screen. Writer, producer, director Phil Flora fails to coax convincing performances from his actors, and is so overconfident in the holding power of his (admittedly handsome-looking) digital scenery that most of the film unreels in endless tracking shots of deserted corridors, making the entire scenario look like little more than a round of Doom set on auto-play mode. (Indeed, there's lots here to suggest that this film may have started life as an especially promising interactive game project.) A noble stab at ushering in the virtual studio, with results as engaging as a Microsoft shareholder's statement.

● Dan Persons

KINDRED: THE EMBRACED

Directed by Peter Medak. Fox TV. 4/96, 90 mins. With: C. Thomas Howell, Kate Vernon, Stacy Haiduk, Brian Thompson, Erik King, Patrick Bauchau, Brigid Warrill, Channon Roe, Basil Hoffman, Richard Danielson, Jeff Kober, Mark Frankel.

KINDRED began life several years ago as a network TV movie and even then it ended in a cliffhanger, so you could tell it was a pilot for a TV series. Patrick Bauchau starred then as the patriarch of a vampire clan. He turns up in this new version, in a less prominent role.

Over the years, vampires as either monsters or romantic figures have been the mainstay of horror movies; lately there have been several films with the theme of vampirism as drug addiction. Now comes vampires as the Mafia: different warring clans or gangs, living amongst us, passing as human, but centuries old, blood drinkers, killing each other with guns loaded with phosphorus.

But, who really cares? None of these characters is remotely interesting or original and most of the no name actors in the cast have little charisma. There aren't any special effects. The vampires change into wolves, but you don't see the transformation; it all happens through editing. An exercise in tedium.

○ Judith Harris

MACROSS PLUS

Directed by Shoji Kawamori. Manga Video. 5/96. 4 tapes, 45 mins. per tape. Anime with English dubbing.

Manga recently released the fourth and final installment of this entertaining, lavishly mounted follow-up to the original MACROSS saga (a.k.a. ROBOTECH here in the states). No interplanetary war this time around; instead the story plays out as a sort of TOP GUN MEETS TRUTH OR DARE, with hotshot pilots Isamu and Guld duking it out in competing mecha prototypes in the air, and wrassling on the ground over Myung, manager (as well as covert heart-and-soul) of the holographic superstar singer Sharon Apple. The lines connecting the air-borne conflict to Myung's struggles with her increasingly sentient, computerized diva could have been more tightly drawn,



The sepulchers of evil spirits open up the gates of Hell in Showtime's **POLTERGEIST: THE LEGACY**, not up to the quality of the movie series.

but director Shoji Kawamori keeps the action up and the emotions engaging, and thankfully possesses enough wit to acknowledge that all these robotic dust-ups are little more than adolescent feuds inflated to gargantuan proportions (in the end, Isamu and Guld attempt to blast each other out of the sky while arguing about who last bought the other lunch). Good fun, with enough emotional veracity to keep the exercise from seeming just another testosterone blow-out.

●● Dan Persons

MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE

Directed by Brian DePalma. Paramount Pictures. 5/96. 111 mins. With: Tom Cruise, Jon Voigt, Emmanuelle Beart.

"Cool!" and "Huh?" are probably the two words that best sum up MISSION IMPOSSIBLE, the movie. The first word is what you say when you see all the high-tech gadgets, flashy special effects and spectacular stunts. The second word is what you say when the movie is over.

It's not that MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE is a bad film; it's just a shallow one. It jettisons the premise of the original TV show, which revolved around a team of secret agents who must work together on certain "impossible missions." Instead, the movie decides to go the route of many standard film noir stories: a loner, pitted against the world, who has to clear his name. Not that there's anything wrong with this idea, but the group dynamic making MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE an ensemble piece like its television predecessor would have opened the film up to more possibilities.

The premise is not as confusing as many audiences have complained. The plot is very straightforward, however. It's as if screenwriters David Koepp, Steven Zaillian and Robert Towne tried to purposely make the film convoluted, trying to fashion a hard-to-decipher labyrinth of a story.

As MISSION's main character Ethan Hunt, Tom Cruise gives an admirable (and physically demanding) performance. His "star power" shines through and it could be argued that he's too much of a presence, as all the supporting actors in the film seem to fade into the background. This is especially true of Ving Rhames and Jean Reno, who play two "disavowed" agents who join up with Hunt. The two characters could have been the perfect opportunity for comic relief (which is sorely lacking throughout), but instead, they are forced to go through the film stone-faced, leaving little room for character development.

With its action set pieces, the film is great fun, but also frustrating, with too many slow, talky moments. MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE's filmmakers should have taken this feeling of visceral entertainment, fully realized only moments before the ending credits, and spread it throughout the film.

●● 1/2 Mike Lyons

OLIVER & COMPANY

Directed by George Scribner. Walt Disney Pictures. 3/96. (1988), 73 mins. Voices: Billy Joel, Cheech Marin, Bette Midler.

Seeing OLIVER & COMPANY in the midst of the Disney studio's animation resurgence, is a bit like looking back on old photographs. The 1988 film signaled the beginning of the Katzenberg/Eisner regime at the studio, which would create such later successes as THE LITTLE MERMAID and BEAUTY AND THE BEAST. OLIVER may not be in the same "company," but the film was the perfect way for the new generation to cut their teeth.

The story, "inspired by" *Oliver Twist*, "contemporizes" Dickens' work by setting it in modern-day Manhattan and "Disnifies" it by putting animals (in this case, dogs and a cat) in the lead roles. The overall look of the film proves that it was a transition point at the studio. The sketchy skyline of New

York City has the rough look of such past Disney efforts as 101 DALMATIANS and THE RESCUERS, yet the computer animation is a harbinger of the slick graphic techniques that were then on the horizon.

The computer images are used for the film's most impressive set piece: a car chase climax on a subway track. The chase is a visceral and violent sequence, which is also one of the film's faults. It's ironic that more recent Disney efforts like LION KING and POCAHONTAS have drawn criticism for their darker tone and violent moments, while there hasn't been much mention of the fact that this earlier effort features a villain who wields a gun and a character who meets his doom by being electrocuted on a subway's third rail. The film's other weak point is the music. Unlike more traditional musicals, where the songs are integral parts of the story, the numbers feel more like top 40 hits that have been shoe-horned into the plot.

Still, there is a lot to like. The cast members emerge as small marvels of character animation. There are also some eye catching backgrounds—beautiful story-book-like renderings of the Big Apple. OLIVER & COMPANY is part of a small group of Disney films that is often overlooked and thankfully this recent re-release brought it back, so that audiences can again see the film that served as the flashpoint for Disney's second golden age.

●● Mike Lyons

POLTERGEIST: THE LEGACY

Directed by: Stuart Gillard. Showtime. 4/96. 89 mins. With: Derek DeLint, Martin Cummins, Robbi Chong, Patrick Fitzgerald, Alexandra Purvis, Helen Shaver, Jordan Bayne, William Sadler.

Showtime launched its new POLTERGEIST TV series in a special double length story. There have been these guardians, The Legacy, since the beginning of time sent to battle evil. Two or three thousand years ago, some Druids trapped five evil spirits in five sepulchers. Now the Legacy has found four of them and is on the verge of finding the fifth. If they fall into the wrong hands, the boxes can be used to open up a direct gateway to Hell, letting loose on Earth a Pandora's box of evil.

Apparently the Druids weren't smart enough to hide the keys to the sepulchers apart from the boxes themselves, so the missing box gets opened pretty quickly and the released demon sets about becoming reborn and getting hold of all the other keys, which the members of the Legacy casually carry around their necks, so they can easily be stolen.

All of this is played out in painful slow motion, with many flashbacks to a pre-title sequence when the head of the Legacy, Derek DeLint, sees his own father killed by one of the sepulcher creatures. The rebirth of the creature from the fifth box is a pornographic embarrassment to Helen Shaver, who must give birth to her own 13-year-old son. There's nothing frightening about this TV series, but it is disgusting, and I can only hope that kids who are fond of Tobe Hooper's POLTERGEIST aren't tempted to watch this nasty crap.

● Judith Harris

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EYE CANDY

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weeks to generate, occupying the weeks from just after Christmas, '95 through January, '96. (The expense of those effects may also explain why the live action settings seem to rely heavily on furnishings retrieved from a local scenery bay.)

If Thornton has any reservations about the outcome of "Cloudhome," they reside mostly in the attempt to cram a plot that wouldn't have been out of place in a full-length feature into a running time less than your average episode of *FRASIER*: "The main thing about 'Cloudhome' that's difficult to swallow, is that in 20 minutes and 13 seconds these kids go in there, save the planet, and completely change the way these people live—which is a little bit far-fetched. But we've only got 20 minutes; we've got to do it somehow." □

HYPERNAUTS

continued from page 43

slated to begin production, pending a network green-light. In the meantime, the producer regards *HYPERNAUTS* as a tidy summation of his own aspirations, not just for the world of Saturday morning kid-vid, but also well beyond those limited bounds: "We get an enormous amount into

these shows. There are a lot of stories still to be told, a lot of things I still want to do. Get them to visit a few more, just incredible places. I do want to get a positive feel to space travel out of the whole thing. Our poor old space program is dying a slow death. The more that we can generate interest in going out there, the better." □

THE STUPIDS

continued from page 15

I think I was more cautious in some of the ideas than I would be if I was making a picture I knew would be R rated. I enjoyed it; it's my first real children's film.

"There are certainly strong elements of Laurel and Hardy within it. It's a little more sophisticated plot-line than Laurel and Hardy, but there are strong elements of it. There's that wonderful skill that Stan Laurel had, that incredible blankness he was able to project: the non-thought. There are some actors that project intelligence, like George C. Scott, E.G. Marshall. Stan Laurel had this amazing ability to project a vacuum—like non-intelligence—that wasn't stupid! That's the other problem: the Stupids are not, in fact, stupid. They're actually terribly clever, they're just insane. What they are is like aliens. There's a whole the-

ory with Laurel and Hardy that they are angels. Have you ever heard that? They're basically aliens; they don't react as we humans react, they see everything from a different point of view."

Even if the film only manages to net audiences who still need supervision to cross the street, Landis claims he'll be satisfied. "Children love it," he said. "THE WIZARD OF OZ, PINOCCHIO, BABE—these are all pictures aimed at children twelve and under; they're very entertaining. The mark of a good children's film for me is that anyone can watch it and enjoy it. *DUMBO* still makes me cry." □

ISLAND OF DR. MOREAU

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makeup and costume. He didn't come in surprising people! He and I talked about it. He was great. He was wonderful. He has his own way of doing things. I think it would be really wrong to tell you how he did that. What really matters is the result. Every actor has their own way of working. He's a genius. He is able to do things that nobody else is able to do."

Brando wasn't the only one thinking on his feet. When it came time to create the micemen, the little beastmen who stop Douglas

from making one last desperate attempt to flee the island, Digital Domain found itself having to create a suspense sequence out of whole cloth.

"The original idea for the micemen just had two of them in a cage in the lab as just an aside," said Mack. "John Frankenheimer felt that it wasn't working and wasn't necessary to the story, so he cut them. The studio and everybody really liked the characters and the idea of the effects. John said, 'Fine, I'm happy to have them in, but they don't fit here. You've got to come up with somewhere else to put them, where they relate to the story.' I don't know who had the idea, probably John. The main character could encounter them as he was trying to escape off the boat toward the beginning of the story. That was all they knew."

With the boat and dock about to be burned for another sequence, David Thewlis was shot running down the dock and getting on the boat, then diving off the boat. Mack wrote and storyboarded a sequence in which the myriad micemen, 14" to 18" tall, attack Douglas and he escapes them, trapping himself on the island. Frankenheimer okayed the sequence, which was reboarded and honed by the second unit director. □

LETTERS

PROPMAKER FOR THE STARS

Thank you so much for your good article [27:11/12:78] on my work on STAR TREK in the current issue. It is doubly gratifying to be recognized since I was not given screen credit.

Wah Chang
Carmel, CA 93923

STAR TREK: A SOLOW EFFORT

I write with the following authority: As Vice President of Desilu Studios, Vice President of Paramount Television and Executive in Charge of Production of STAR TREK, I was responsible for the sale, development and production of both pilots and the series. Gene Roddenberry and the entire STAR TREK cast, crew and studio personnel reported to me. No decisions regarding personnel, casting, budgets, STAR TREK-NBC affairs were made without my approval. I am also the co-author of the current release of Pocket Books' *Inside STAR TREK—The Real Story*.

Some 28 years ago I resigned my position at Paramount Pictures to head television production at MGM and, in essence, left the STAR TREK world behind. Three years ago, however, sick and tired of the lies, falsehoods, duplicitous mumbo-jumbo and the like that has overgrown the goodness of STAR TREK much like the slime that overgrows a rain forest, I returned to that world to write the above mentioned book. My hopes were to set the record straight, to give credit where credit was long overdue to those creative and talented people who made such important contributions to the original series.

And to speak as the voice of one who was there at the very beginning, who hired all the players, who ran most of the meetings, who ran the entire show—not merely as another interloper who interviews people he/she never knew, reads and analyzes documents he/she does not understand, who deals with revisionism, heresy, ego, innuendo and aged and fragile minds who cannot remember what happened last week, much less 30 years ago. And on and on.

An associate faxed me portions of your current issue [27:11/12] dealing with STAR TREK. I read the material in stunned silence as I saw more of the same that has been so destructive to the series over the years—an unfortunate return to the bliss of Stone Age ignorance.

I am not out hawking my book. I know there are copies of it at most public libraries. So it is not necessary to buy the book, but it is necessary to borrow the book from the library and read it—if you, your writers or your readers care to learn what really happened. And know how it happened and who caused it to happen.

Herbert F. Solow
Malibu, CA 90265

[Our exhaustive interview with Solow will appear in a future issue. In the meantime, the truth is out there—get the book. FSC]

WRONG ON WILLY WONKA

While I appreciated Lawrence French's in-depth coverage of JAMES AND THE GIANT PEACH, I disagree with his review of WILLY WONKA & THE CHOCOLATE FACTORY in the Roald Dahl filmography section [27:9:26].

French's summary that "the whole movie [is] an exercise in boredom" is completely at odds with the vision of just about everyone I know who has seen the film. I consider it one of the best "children's" movies ever, with a dark undertone and unsettling nature that has long been absent from the so-called family films of recent years. Granted, there are elements that don't work (the Oompa-Loompas, the cheesy bouncing ball song titles), but these weaknesses are more than rectified by the film's strengths (the relationship between Charlie and Grandpa Joe, the cruel punishments that befall the "bad" children, even the "Monty Pythonesque" search for the golden tickets).

Furthermore, French's claim that "Gene Wilder provides little of the charisma needed as Willy Wonka" is downright baffling. I was five years old when the film was released in 1971, and to say that Wilder made an impression on me would be an understatement. Whether it's his hysterical boat ride song or unconcerned responses to misbehavior ("She was a bad egg"), Wilder scared the hell out of me. Repeated viewings over the years has reinforced my appreciation of his subtle, unnerving performance. Clearly, he's the best reason to see WILLY WONKA.

I don't suppose French will be in line for the film's 25th anniversary re-release this summer, but I will.

Jim Cole
Burbank, CA 91506

[Me, too. And for the record, CFQ gave the film a rave review (2:1:32) on its release in 1971, calling it "a pure, sometimes irresistible delight..." FSC]

SUMMING UP JAMES CAMERON

Has anyone noticed that James Cameron's movies bear striking resemblances to other, better pieces of work that precede them? Yet he doesn't seem to give any credit where it's due.

STRANGE DAYS [27:9:52] was a great movie, but the sci-fi elements were swiped from Win Wenders' 1991 masterpiece UNTIL THE END OF THE WORLD. That film also takes place during the last days of the 20th century, and involves a device that records human experience, which can then be played back in someone else's mind at the risk of possible addiction.

TERMINATORS I & II were taken from Chris Marker's 1962 film LA JETEE, which inspired 12 MONKEYS, a much better movie (and Marker received credit). The entire future man-machine conflict was taken directly from short stories by Philip K. Dick, particularly "Second Variety" (now the film SCREAMERS), "Jon's World," "James P. Crow" and "Autofac," all published between 1953-55.

THE ABYSS apes Michael Crichton's 1987 novel *Sphere*, combined with Spielberg's CLOSE ENCOUNTERS (1977).

TRUE LIES mimics James Bond. Why didn't Cameron just sign on to do GOLDENEYE?

THE TITANIC (coming soon) is a dead horse. It doesn't need another telling.

Ernie Hold
Port Orange, FL 33127

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CARPENTER

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We've spent some time together. He works very hard on his projects and he takes it very seriously and he likes them to turn out well. But, one of the realities of this genre is that when you get to a certain level, they just beat the hell out of you."

Many of the best-known names in horror filmmaking, including Stephen King, Tobe Hooper, David Cronenberg, Wes Craven, Barker and Carpenter, have either left the genre completely or suffered the humiliation of empty theaters and the barbs of critics. Carpenter feels the problem is the lack of original and creative storylines.

"It's very clear to me that it's gotten worse," said Carpenter, about the present state of the world. "It's unbelievable now. Fascism returns! That bombing in Oklahoma City was pretty grim. The neo-Nazis in Germany is pretty grim. You know the political speech these days is wild crap man. It's wild! There's all this stuff and it's just stunning to me.

"During this time it's obvious that people have turned away from horror films. But, I don't think that it's because of the political climate. I think it's just because there haven't been any really good new ideas in horror that have connected with the audience. I think that they'll come back when it happens. And, it will come back." □

DRAGONHEART

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real. It's a myth. It's a legend.' I said no, he's got to be a consistent character. He's a real dragon. He's a real character. He talks one way. He thinks one way. He has a psychology. He has a physiology. He acts and reacts the way a character must react.

"I put those demands on myself and everybody else—that we do not ever slip into, 'Well, it's all visual effects so anything is possible.' I think the result is that Draco's performance is grounded both in the Sean Connery aspect of it and in the visual aspect of it. To me it feels very real."

Cohen's efforts paid off. When Dragonheart opened May 31, it earned nearly \$20 million its first week, topped only by MISSION: IMPOSSIBLE and TWISTER. The film continued to draw strong business throughout the summer, making it a big hit for Universal. □

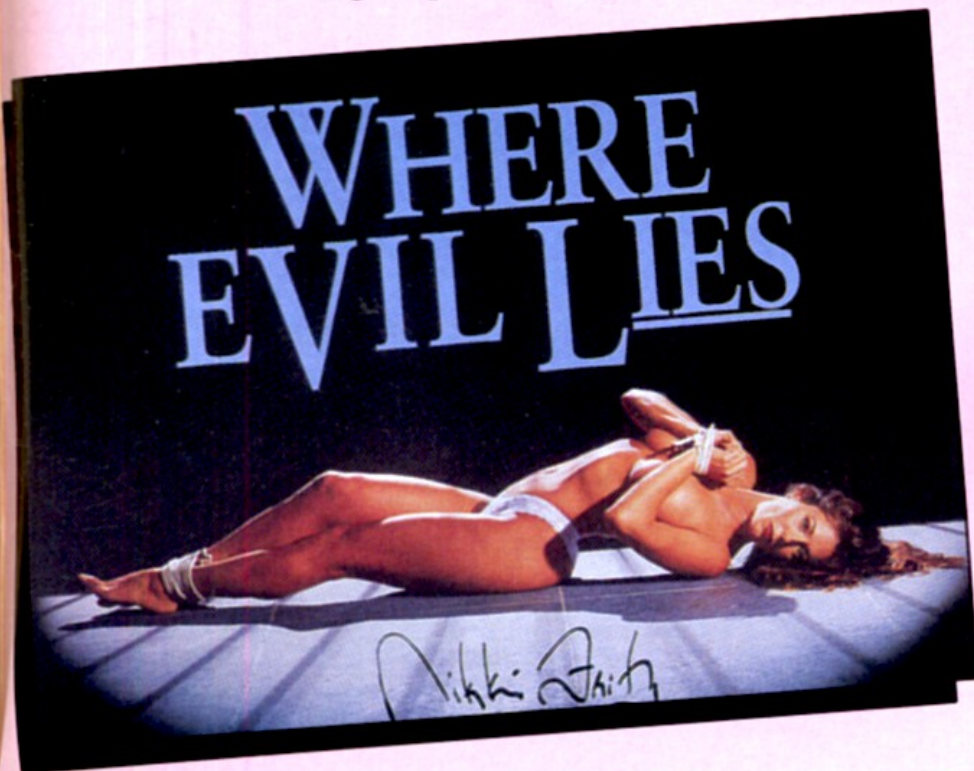
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Start with our next issue, Volume 5 Number 5 (right), as we take you to the set of VAMPIRELLA in Las Vegas, the Roger Corman movie for Showtime cable, based on the popular comic book vampire. Our on-location report by Mark Carducci includes interviews with director Jim Wynorski, screenwriter Gary Gerani, Forry Ackerman, the legendary comic creator who appears in a cameo role, PHANTASM star Angus Scrim, who plays Vampi's father, the High Elder of Drakulon and Roger Daltry who plays Vlad, Vampi's nemesis. Carducci also chronicles the film's makeup effects, costuming and the history of the comic character. And also in the same issue, an interview with Dragon Lady Dina Meyer, star of DRAGON-HEART, Gina Gershon, the SHOWGIRLS star who talks about making VOODOO DAWN, and much more! Subscribe today!

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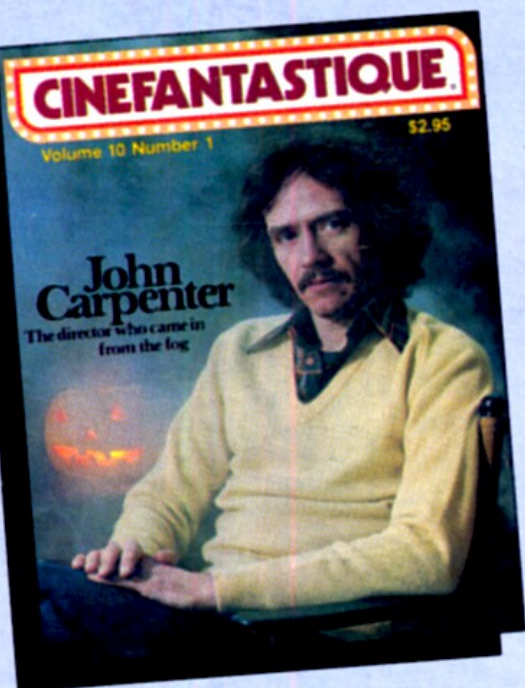
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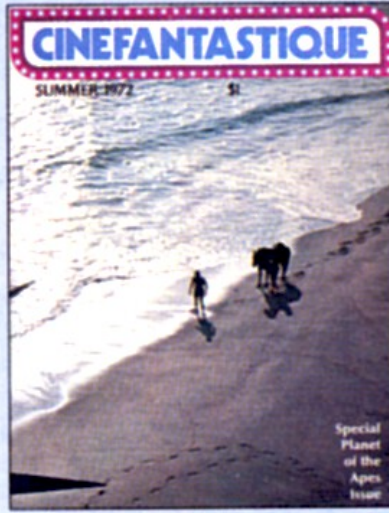
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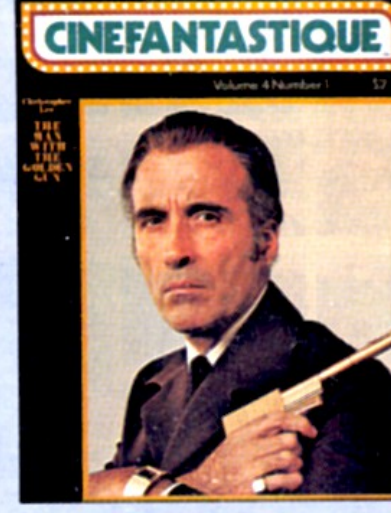
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